

IN DEAD  
EARNEST.

JULIA BRECKINRIDGE.





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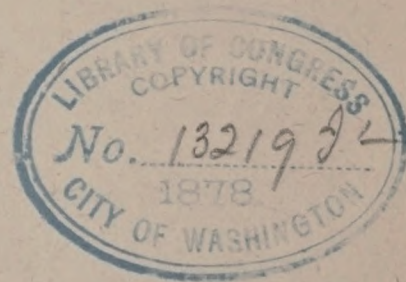






# IN DEAD EARNEST.

BY  
JULIA BRECKINRIDGE.



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# IN DEAD EARNEST.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE clouds were lowering ; a mist was sweeping over the Atlantic coast. Down in the Carolinas and in Virginia this mist soon turned to rain, but as it rolled farther North it developed itself in snow-flakes, which, as night approached, began to fall thick and fast.

The northern-bound train seemed running a race with the storm-king. As twilight deepened into night, the lamps were swung inside the long line of coaches, the burning lights in front glared like demons' eyes athwart the snow, and as the engine poured forth its sparks of fire and volumes of smoke, one who was not on board the train might well have imagined, as he saw it, that a destroying angel was madly tearing along the track.

At last the city of Philadelphia was reached ; there was hurrying to and fro, and every preparation among the passengers for hasty exit. One old gentleman in a drab-colored coat and broad-brimmed hat had accumulated his treasures in a heap, and now stood looking around, puzzled as to what he should next do. He presently went to a seat



behind him whereon was coiled something under a shawl, and stooping, whispered, "Jasper! Jasper! thee must wake up now. We are almost at home. Don't thee hear, Jasper? Wake up, child!"

The passengers were leaving the train, and yet the little sleeper, exhausted and unaccustomed to the fatigue of travel, could not be roused. A young man of about nineteen, tall and well formed, with the down of a coming mustache upon his upper lip, seeing the dilemma of the old gentleman, came forward and offered his services.

"Thee will find her too heavy to lift, I fear, but if thee has a mind to lend me a helping hand, I will thank thee, for it is a bad night, and we should be getting into a coach as soon as possible."

The young man lifted the child from the seat, and wrapped his own cloak around her, while the Quaker gathered his parcels and led the way to the door of the coach. Just then Jasper woke up and struggled to get upon her feet, but the wind was blowing a hurricane, and the snow was on the ground, and the stranger held on to his burden until he deposited it safely in the carriage to which the gentleman led the way.

"Thee has proved a friend in need," he said. "I would be glad to render *thee* a service at any time."

The young man simply replied that he "was welcome to his assistance," and with a touch of his hat hurried off to catch the train for New York.

Poor little Jasper! Eight years old and an orphan! She had led a wild, free, happy life so far. She could



beat any girl of her age in the whole country, riding, running, and jumping, and could swim like a fish in the bargain. Her father and mother had died within a few weeks of each other, and she had been left to the care of an uncle, who was taking her to his home for the first time.

It was not long before Ephraim Grantland was landed safely at his own door, but on account of the new-fallen snow his arrival had been so noiseless that it was very evident that no one had found it out. After several ineffectual pulls at the door-bell, feet were heard in the hall, and admittance was gained.

"Come in, child," said Ephraim to the muffled-up little figure, that seemed to hesitate from sheer bewilderment; "here is thy aunt Hester, and here is thy cousin Abel."

After Hester Grantland had greeted her husband, she turned to his companion, and looking into the weary face and the large, almost unnaturally sad eyes, said, "And this is Jasper? Why, child, I had heard thee was handsome." Hester imprinted a cold kiss on Jasper's forehead, but did not observe the deep flush that crimsoned her cheek the while.

"Poor little wanderer!" said Ephraim, "thee is glad thee has gotten to thy place of rest no doubt, for the journey has gone hard with thee. Take off thy wet wraps; and, Hester," he continued, "if thee has any supper for us, the sooner ready the better; Jasper will sleep without rocking to-night."

Mrs. Grantland's table was a perfect marvel of neatness. The fragrant tea sent its aroma through the room, and Hes-



ter, as she took her seat before the tea-tray, motioned the others to their appointed places around the table. All sat in perfect silence for some moments. Jasper then unwittingly rattled her knife and fork, yet even Abel did not lift his eyes from his plate until Hester dispelled the charm by applying her hand to the handle of the tea-kettle. Abel then made an attack on the bread, and the cheese was drawn affectionately towards Ephraim.

"Thee is unacquainted with the customs of the Society of Friends, I see," said Mr. Grantland to Jasper. "Thee must remember hereafter to preserve silence for the purpose of asking a blessing before partaking of thy meals. Thee must endeavor to conform to our customs since thee has become a member of our family."

Jasper murmured faintly, "I will try."

"That is all I ask, my child," said Ephraim Grantland, pleased with his niece's reply. "If we try we can do much, and nothing worth doing is done without trying much."

The cup that cheers but not inebriates put new life into Jasper, and she began to make a survey of the room with her large wondering eyes. Opposite her sat her Cousin Abel, a fair specimen of a healthy, handsome boy, but the contrast between his face and his costume caused Jasper to smile involuntarily. The lad saw this and blushed. Hester Grantland bore upon her features the stamp of an iron will, which was only toned down by the extreme serenity of her manner. The closely-fitting white cap, the snowy handkerchief crossed upon her ample bosom, the soft gray of her plain dress, were all in keeping with the autumnal tint of



carpet, chairs, curtains, etc. The coffin-like figures upon the rug made Jasper turn her eyes away ; they next fell upon the cat. Nature, regardless of Hester Grantland's opinion upon the subject, had given puss a coat of orange and black, and a tail of the same. Forgetful of time, place, and circumstances, Jasper, thinking only of a pet kitten she had left at home, and feeling as if she had at last found something to let out her heart upon, sprang from the table, and, in the energy of her affection, took the cat in her arms.

"Put down the cat," said Hester with that placid decision of manner from which there seemed to be no appeal. "If thee has finished thy supper thee can go upstairs ; thee will find Sophy Gregg there, who will tell thee where thy room is. Take thy wet cloak out of the hall. I will have thee waked in the morning. Good-night to thee." Jasper held up her face for the good-night kiss, but Hester was busy about the tea-things and did not see her. The child made one spring into her uncle's lap, and throwing her arms around his neck buried her face upon his shoulders.

"Do *you* love me?" she said, while a great sob seemed almost rending her bosom.

Ephraim Grantland smoothed back her hair caressingly, and said, "Little girls must not ask foolish questions ; actions speak louder than words. I should think, dear, thee had found out before this whether I loved thee or not. Go to bed now. I hope thee will be a good girl, and mind all that thy aunt Hester says to thee, and not give her trouble. There—I will kiss thee for her and myself too ;" and thus dismissed, Jasper went in search of her unknown dormitory.



The table clear of the tea-things, and Abel gone to his books, Hester sat by the fire with her knitting, while Ephraim related the circumstances of his journey. He had reached his sister's home only two days before her death. That sister had married Col. St. John, and gone to a far-off Virginia home. Gradually, one by one of her family dropped off, until Ephraim and herself were the sole remaining members. Reverses came ; then she was a widow ; and this last blow deepened a disease which had already fastened its hold upon her, and on her death-bed she wrote asking her brother to come to her. Hester Grantland knew all this, but she had not ventured to deter Ephraim from the visit ; she had only said, " Remember thee has a son of thy own to educate, and thee is getting on in years beside." Ephraim Grantland felt that he could not shirk the charge of his only sister's only child, and therefore set forth on his journey, for, like all quiet men, there were some things he would do despite the lack of encouragement from his wife. He yielded most points to her superior judgment, as he called it, but once in a while that judgment was set at naught, and on this occasion Hester found there was no use throwing obstacles in the way. Ephraim had listened with the mildest expression of countenance, but quietly adhered to his intention of taking the journey South. He had gone, and was now back again. And " Hester," said he, " it was well that I went ; I feel quite sure that I shall never regret it."



## CHAPTER II.

THE sun was high in the heavens the next morning before Jasper opened her eyes. She would very likely have gone on sleeping until midday if Sophy Gregg had not put her head in at the door, saying, "Who-y, not up yet? I am thinking Mrs. Hester will be after you; hurry, hurry!" said the help; "it's wash-day—*you* know;" and with this her shining face disappeared.

Jasper did not know, however. She had yet to learn that Ephraim Grantland's house boasted but one servant, or help, and that help was the aforesaid Sophy; that Sophy was to hurry over the breakfast, clean up the house, and have the clothes hanging upon the line by eleven o'clock. Jasper rubbed her eyes well to get them open; then, with characteristic impetuosity, broke two or three shoe-strings; then fastened her key in the key-hole of her trunk, could not find her pins, and finally reached the dining-room after the morning's meal had commenced.

"Good-morning to thee. Thy uncle has gone to his business," said Hester, noticing that Jasper's eyes turned toward his vacant seat. "He has no time to spend in bed of a morning. Sit down to thy breakfast; when thee is done, thee is to go to school; all arrangements have been made for thy education. Abel, thee is to show thy cousin the way to Dr. Beckwith's; mind that thee puts on thy overcoat and snow-shoes."



"Can thee knit and sew?" said Hester, addressing herself to her young niece.

"I can sew *some*."

"We cannot afford to be idle here," went on Hester.

"Thee can sew *some*. What else can thee do?"

"I can play a little on the piano and sing; I can write, ride on horseback, fire a pistol, dance, and"—forgetting entirely where she was—"I can do *this*," said Jasper, and, jumping up from the table, she posed herself, and then doubled backward until her head almost touched her heels.

Abel spilt his coffee, and burst into such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that the tears ran down his cheeks, while his mother regarded the calisthenic exercises with placid scorn, saying, "Eat thy breakfast; we want no circus performances here. Has thee gotten to the end of thy list of accomplishments?"

"I know right much French," said Jasper, not a little discouraged, but trying to draw comfort from a hot buttered roll.

"Did thee expect to go to France?" asked Hester with keen sarcasm.

"Oh, yes! Papa was going to send me there to school—he wouldn't have let me come here if he had lived. He didn't like the Quakers a bit. Oh, he just *despised* 'em!"

Abel here gave way to another outburst; and Jasper, seeing all at once that she had said something amiss, clapped her hand over her mouth for a second, exclaiming, "There now! that's just like me—uncle's a Quaker; I'm sure everybody loves *him*."

"It is a matter of no consequence who *thee* loves, or what



thee thinks of the Society of Friends," said Hester. "Finish thy breakfast. It is hard to tell whether thy father was training thee for the cavalry or the hippodrome."

"Oh, I think it must have been the *hippodrome*," said Jasper, taken with the sound of the name. "He wanted me to be a boy, but I *wasn't* a boy, and he taught me all sorts of things that girls didn't do. I used to ride over the plantation with him, and he would let me fire at a mark while he held my hand, and he made me practise all sorts of things to make me strong; and mamma thought every thing papa did was right, and it *was*."

"Get thy bonnet and go with Abel," said Hester sternly. "Thy uncle has selected thy books at the school. I will have some sewing for thee in my work-basket when thee returns. I expect thee to do thy daily task with thy needle."

Thus silenced, Jasper got up from the table, and prepared herself for the first day at school. As for Abel, when he was once fairly in the open air he kicked up his heels, tossed his hat on high, and seemed to enjoy the freedom from the restraint he was under at home quite as much as any boy could. He teased Jasper no little about the hippodrome; offered to post her bills when she got ready for a public exhibition. This, of course, brought on a quarrel, and Jasper informed him that she didn't like him anyhow, whereupon Abel replied that there was no love lost between them, as he had little use for "*tom-boys*." A few moments more brought them to the place of their destination and into the presence of the principal of one of the largest schools in the city. The gentleman was evidently expecting them, for he



came forward and spoke kindly to Jasper and Abel, and the latter, abashed under the gaze of nearly a hundred school-girls, made a hasty exit, whispering to Jasper as he did so, "*Thee can find thy way home by thyself.*"

Jasper was assigned a seat by a pretty little curly-headed girl about her own age, who pointed out the lessons for the next day, and showed such a kind interest in the new-comer that Jasper asked her name.

"I am Katie Lee," was the reply.

"And I am Jasper St. John," said her companion, and having been thus introduced they became intimate at once, and were seen with their heads close together over their books until the recess bell was rung. They were then observed promenading the long gallery, with their arms around each other, as loquacious and confidential as if they had been acquainted for years.

On Jasper's return home she found Sophy Gregg with flaming face and skirts tucked up, sprinkling and folding the clothes, while Hester assisted in laying each article in the mammoth basket before her. Jasper was given the sewing prepared for her by her aunt, and she stitched away quite diligently for some moments, having made several ineffectual efforts at a conversation, first with Mrs. Grantland and then with Sophy. But presently Ephraim Grantland's footsteps were heard, and needle, thread, thimble, and cloth went flying in every direction as Jasper sprang toward him. Ephraim bent down, and, taking her face between his hands, kissed her as he said, "Child, thee has all of thy mother's affectionate nature, with thy father's impetuosity. Thee



must study to be quiet. She will get toned down, wife, as she grows older."

"I hope so," said Hester dryly. "In the mean time I will thank thee, Jasper, to pick up my work-basket, and to put away my scissors and needles, if thee intends to devote thyself to conversation for the rest of the day."

Jasper put away every thing with alacrity, and, glad to find a listener in her uncle, gave an account of her experience at school, expressing her opinion of each individual, and winding up with an amusing account of the queer-looking professor of music, who wore his wig on the side of his head.

"Is he the one, uncle, who will teach me music?"

Before Ephraim could reply, Hester said quietly, "Thy uncle cannot afford to have thee taught by him or any one else; thee may as well reconcile thyself to *that*."

Jasper gave an inquiring, wistful look out of her gray eyes, and saw that Hester was telling the truth.

"Go now and study thy lessons for the morrow, and when thee is done help Sophy set the dinner-table; she has overmuch work on hand to-day."

Mr. and Mrs. Grantland being left to themselves, Hester thought it a fit opportunity for discoursing upon the mistakes made in Jasper's education.

"But thee knows," said Ephraim in reply, "she is but a light-hearted child now, and we must mould her character. We are too apt to forget that we were once young ourselves. Was I not a middle-aged man before I joined the Society of Friends? I should not mind Jasper's learning music, but since thee objects I yield that point. In all else she shall



have a first-rate education. Her father was a fine linguist, and I think she inherits his talent."

"She had better be taught to sew," said Hester.

"Of course she must learn woman's work, and with thy example I am pretty sure she will do so, Hester. Cheer thee up, wife; don't be over-anxious; there is no royal road to learning any thing. Line upon line, precept upon precept, must be the rule; and with thee to inculcate the daily lesson, our little waif may grow up to be a fine woman. Who knows but what she may prove a blessing to thee when Abel goes to college?"

"Don't be too confident of it," said Hester, with a shake of her head. "Think of a child's galloping wild horses, firing pistols, etc!"

"But always under her father's eye. However, I do not seek to justify the training, and I agree with thee that it was unfortunate, especially as she will no longer enjoy the freedom of the country. Edgar St. John had his faults, it is true, but he was of a frank and generous nature. We must not 'draw his frailties from their dread abode,' but be kind to his orphan child, Hester. 'Whoso giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.'"



## CHAPTER III.

"THEE is to make thy own bed," said Mrs. Grantland to Jasper one morning, as she saw Sophy arranging the pillows.

"Oh, I like it—it's fun!" said Jasper; "I make it every morning, only Sophy will always put on a few extra touches."

Sophy had winked at Jasper in vain to hold her tongue. "There now, it's all up," whispered Sophy, as Mrs. Grantland went downstairs. "I'll never be allowed to touch it again. You'd better remember, to-morrow morning, not to put the blankets all on one side and the sheets on t'other; folks may make beds that way down South, but we city folks *don't*. Now, you must sweep—this is the way;" and she wielded the broom with a vigorous hand. "When you have swept, *dust!* Mrs. Grantland hates dust like p'ison. Go ahead now," she added, handing Jasper the broom. "I can't stay, for my bread will be burning."

The next morning Jasper tugged at her bed with all her might, but do what she would the foot was ever so much higher than the head, while there was a superabundance of bed-clothes on one side and a dearth of them on the other. Finally the shapeless mass was smoothed down, and Jasper regarded her work with a glance of inward satisfaction.

"Is this the result of thy industry?" said Mrs. Grantland, as she entered the room.



“And isn't it nice?” exclaimed Jasper, as, with the spring of an athlete, she whirled over the rods of the four-posted bedstead and lighted upon her feet.

“Thee seems to feel little concern as to thy misdoings,” said Hester, as she took off piece by piece of the bedding and laid it upon a chair. “If thee makes thy bed before thy school hour, thee will have to be brisk ; it lacks five minutes of the time,” and Mrs. Grantland went out without saying another word.

Jasper threw herself upon the floor and gave way to a passionate burst of weeping. “Sophy ! Sophy !” she screamed. But Sophy could not hear ; she had put away the bread and gone to market. Jasper remembered suddenly that she would be late at school ; she sprang up, recklessly dashed counterpane and every thing else over the bed at once, and, seizing her bonnet, rushed out of the house. She was too late, and as a punishment had to take her place at the foot of her class. The child was getting desperately homesick, and thought seriously of running away ; only she didn't know where to run to. She wondered if little girls ever sold newspapers about the streets ; she was sure she could do it as well as any one ; but then “where would the papers come from ?” She did try to do her best sometimes, “but what was the use ; no one ever knew it. What was the use of being good anyhow—who cared ?”

Her uncle was duly informed of every failure in duty, and he looked sadly at her, and sighed heavily when he heard of her misdemeanors.

Jasper found little to vary the monotony of the hours.



When Sunday came, the Grantlands went to the Quaker "meeting-house," where each person sat in perfect silence until the spirit moved either some man or woman to address the congregation. It was a strange sight to Jasper to see the men all ranged on one side of the house and the women on the other, with a tall partition between. How quaint the females all looked in their coal-scuttle bonnets and short dresses! Then there was never any singing or praying. "What *could* it all mean?"

Hungry for music, every opportunity that Jasper could snatch at school she haunted the rooms where the girls were taking lessons, and while she was hid under the piano learned quite as much as the regular pupil. Many a time when the professor had gone to his dinner, Jasper stole from her hiding-place, crept to the piano-stool, and went through the exercise which had just been taught some one else. This helped more than any thing to drive away the homesick feeling, though it came back again. True, Professor Reinberg was cross, he stormed at the girls fearfully, but Jasper didn't mind it—the beautiful music made up for all. Besides, he never saw *her*; when music was going on, he cared for nothing else, saw nothing else; even his beautiful little golden-haired Bertha, his only child, whom he loved better than any thing in the world, was not noticed then. This same infant Bertha had become a darling with Jasper. If there was any delicacy in her lunch-basket, it was always shared with Bertha. All the toys and pretty things that Jasper owned gradually came into the possession of the little pet, until



Professor Reinberg became well acquainted with the name of Jasper, although he did not know her when he saw her.

A year had passed now. Jasper was growing, but at the same time great black rings were under her eyes, and as the winter advanced a hacking cough seemed to have settled upon her lungs. Miss Harrison, in whose classes she recited, noticed the change, and seemed concerned about it, but Jasper declared she was quite well, and the matter was dropped.

One gloomy winter's day, concealed behind a curtain during her play-hour, Jasper as usual listened to the Professor giving his music lesson. The pupil could not take in the difference between the leger-line notes which were *on* the line and those *under* the line. The master waxed more and more impatient, until at last he grew hot and then furious. "I tell you de note is *under* de line—it is not *on* de line," he almost shrieked. "Can you not see?"

The young victim at the piano trembled visibly.

"I will ask you one more time," he said. "Is dat note *under* de line or is it *on* de line?"

A faint, weak voice answered, "On the line."

The professor sprang from his seat, and, exasperated beyond measure, scattered sheets of music far and wide, while, in order to give a practical illustration of the situation of the note, he scrambled under the piano, and, squatting down, said, "Look at me! Am I *under* de piano or am I *on top of de piano*? Will you tell me?"

The victim, now in a flood of hysterical tears, could not say any thing. Here the professor sprang into the middle



of the room, jerking the music from the instrument and tearing it into strips.

"I can teach de music, but I cannot furnish de brains ; I will not give de lessons to one idiot."

He raved, he stormed, he dashed his wig to the farthest corner of the room.

"You need not come here again. You shall not put a finger on de keys. I wish you were dead and your bones were bleached !"

He turned around to hurl the culprit from the piano-stool, but found a second person there. It was Jasper, who had come out from her hiding-place, and had taken her stand by the frightened girl.

"How came you here?" thundered the irate man.

"I come here every day at this time," said Jasper ; "if it makes you angry, I won't come any more, but please don't scold Katie ; she knows all her notes ; I heard her say them yesterday."

"Why don't she say de notes if she know dem?" asked the professor.

"You scare her so," said Jasper.

"One big lie," exclaimed the German. "Besides *you* don't know if she say de note right or not. Don't you never dare to come to dis room, never no more again—you hear me? Wasn't you in de fear I would kill you if I did find out?"

"No," said Jasper, "I wish I were dead anyhow."

"One nother big, big lie, you wicked creature."

"If you don't believe me I will prove it," said Jasper,



and she put her hand down her bosom, and drew out a hard ball of snow.

Here was a case for investigation. The professor now calmed down ; simply motioned the pupil from the room, and turned his attention to Jasper.

“ And dat is de way you take for to kill yourself. I shall report you. What for you do dat for ? ”

“ I want to go to my mother,” said Jasper.

“ And where is she ? ”

“ In heaven.”

“ But you will not go to any such a place if you do a dreadful ting like dat. You will go to de torment.”

Jasper now looked frightened, and said, “ I heard my aunt say this morning she would get rid of me as soon as she could. Nobody loves me, and I don’t want to stay where I am.”

“ Come sit down,” said the man, forgetting his own troubles in the interest awakened. “ What for did you come to dis room ? ”

“ To hear you give the lessons, so I could learn, for my aunt says that my uncle must not spend so much money on me, and will not let me be taught ; besides she is a very strict Quaker and thinks music is a sin.”

“ De goose-head ! Have you learn anyting ? ”

“ I can play some exercises in that book.”

“ Prove it ! ” said the professor positively.

Jasper took her seat, and executed the first lesson she came to with such neatness and precision that the teacher was astonished.



"Who *are* you?" he demanded when she had finished.

"I am Jasper! Your little girl knows me."

"Is dis de little Jasper she make much talk of? You was one bad child to put dat snow in your bosom; you must not do so never no more—do you hear? It is wrong, it is very wicked."

"Is it wicked to get angry?" asked Jasper.

"You mean *me*. I get mad with one idiot sometime," said the professor, a smile breaking out in spite of himself.

"Oh, please don't any more!" said Jasper; "you look so dreadful—just like the old scratch, and not a bit like little Bertha's papa. Poor Katie gets so frightened. Please let her come again, and don't scold so much."

"My bark is worse dan de bite," said the professor, patting her on the head. "Go tell Katie to come, and you come too; but mind, you *snow-ball* yourself never no more again—you hear? Do you promise?"

"And may I come whenever I have my play-time, like I used to?"

"If you promise."

"Oh, I promise, and I'm ever so glad besides; and I'll run and hunt up Katie and be back in two minutes;" and with this Jasper dashed breathlessly from the room in search of her crestfallen companion.

Professor Reinberg was at the bottom of his heart a kind man. He did not fail to bring the singular conduct of Jasper to the notice of Miss Harrison. She discovered at once the cause of the hacking cough and hollow eyes, and felt convinced that a child with such a remarkable disposition



should be looked after. The incident in regard to the ball of snow was related to Mrs. Grantland at the earliest opportunity. Hester relaxed sufficiently from the frigidity of her manner to say she had never dreamed of a child of nine years old attempting suicide. "There was something desperate in such a nature."

Miss Harrison agreed that "it was dreadful," but said she, "What a capacity for loving that child must have! There must have been such a feeling of utter loneliness, such a pent-up passionate yearning for the dead mother, before such an act could have been committed! Dear Mrs. Grantland, do not let us judge her too harshly. I think—indeed, I am almost sure—she fancies herself in the way in your house."

This was an unfortunate disclosure for Jasper. Her uncle was informed of her behavior, Abel taunted her day after day with it, and even Sophy, who had been friendly, exclaimed in horror when she overheard the matter discussed.

Miss Harrison proved herself a good angel now. Her sympathizing nature was ever ready to respond to the claim of the lonely and wretched, and the cold replies and indifferent manner of Mrs. Grantland during their interview opened her eyes to the situation of affairs much more than Jasper's conduct had done. She drew the child toward her by little deeds of kindness, inculcating lessons of patience and forbearance at the same time. From this gentle woman Jasper in time learned that "the path of the cross is the



path of light." Her rebellious nature ceased to chafe at its thralldom.

As days lapsed into months and months into years she learned the lesson that we must all get by heart as we journey through life.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

HESTER GRANTLAND was no hypocrite, but she worshipped God in fear, not in love. She was deficient in that power which could blend the rules of a Christian life with its daily duties in such a manner as to lead her young charge step by step to a loftier aim, till the heart, cleansed and lifted out of its natural self, leaned toward the "Fountain of all joy." Although leading a life untainted by a single worldly aspiration, she was entirely deficient in sympathy for the weaknesses of human nature, and discountenanced all who did not subscribe to her frigid code. Had she loved God, she would have loved His creatures more. That a person of such a disposition ever became the wife of Ephraim Grantland can be accounted for only by that subtle law of antagonism peculiar to human nature. She was a type of no particular sect; we see just such persons professing various creeds, but, whatever their belief, they do dishonor to the name of Christian. When Mrs. Grantland rose to speak in the "meeting-house," every eye was fixed upon her, and



stubborn was the heart that did not quail under her denunciations. While she scorned all the arts of rhetoric and elocution, her arguments were clear, the language of her sermons unexceptionable, and, although she delivered each discourse with clasped hands and eyes turned neither to the right nor left, her audience felt that her words cut like a two-edged sword. When Jasper first saw her aunt rise and take her text in "meeting" a nervous tremor took possession of the child. Hester laid aside her coal-scuttle bonnet, and, posing herself with an air of calm dignity, called out in a voice which penetrated to every corner of the well-filled church, "*There is no God!*" (Then there was a pause.) Again, and still louder, she cried out, "*There is no God!*"

Jasper trembled all over, and many of the elders in the congregation moved uneasily in their seats ; but Hester went on to say, "Who says there is no God? The *fool*; none but the fool, out of his depraved heart, saith this, my brethren. Averse to obedience, dreading the all-seeing eye of the Omnipotent One, man *wishes* that there were none. Conscious of guilt, expecting nothing but wrath, man would fain quiet his fears, and saith in his *heart*, not in his mind, there is no God."

She dwelt upon the terrors of the law and not upon the redeeming love of the Saviour, and holding forth in this style for twenty minutes more, at the end of that time resumed her bonnet, and sat down with the air of one who had tried to do her duty. Where was He who said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow"?



When the spirit moved the congregation to disperse, many commented on the edifying words they had heard from friend Grantland, but Hester went her way homeward, caring little what any one thought of her. The atmosphere of such a household as hers was not conducive to the healthy growth of a nature like Jasper's. Her many faults, though remarked upon, were not dealt with in the proper way, and such a course might have led to bad results but for the counteracting kindness of Miss Harrison. That lady having found out that the key to Jasper's nature was love, determined to make the best use of the secret; and gradually the child learned to confide in her. Ever since the day when Jasper had acted so conspicuous a part in the scene between Katie and Professor Reinberg, Katie had attached herself to her more firmly than ever. Little Bertha loved her too, and always ran to greet her with the morning kiss; so there were some few gleams of sunshine in the leaden sky, and the world was not so dark after all. She was partially relieved also of one tormentor—namely, Abel. He had been sent off to school, and only came home once in a great while. During one of his visits he reminded her of the first night she spent in her uncle's house. "Thee did not think I saw thee smiling at me," said he, "but I did."

"I am used to you now," rejoined Jasper.

"But thee would like me better in clothes like other boys?"

"I don't know that I should like you as well. I hope you don't care what *I* wear," Jasper added, glancing down at the rather shabby dress which she had on.



"Thee is a girl, and came from down South, where they feed the slaves on cotton-seed. I can't expect thee to have any feeling."

"It is no such thing!" said Jasper vehemently. "We didn't call them slaves either; we called them uncle and aunt, and we loved some of them a great sight better than some of our own aunts, too."

"Thee needn't tell me—I know all about *that*."

Here Mrs. Grantland entered, and Abel continued, "Mother, did thee know Jasper was of African descent?"

"I am *not*!" Jasper cried out indignantly.

"Thee claims kin with the negro anyhow."

"I don't care if I do," said Jasper angrily, unable to explain the origin of the custom. "I know who my great-grandfather was, and I know what became of him, and that's more than you do." The latter part of this remark was intended to apply to Jasper's own parentage, but Abel misunderstood her.

"Mother," said he, "can thee tell us what became of my grandfather?"

"Thee could find out from history; but if thee is impatient to hear I will tell thee," said his mother.

"By all means," replied Abel; "Jasper would like to know."

"He was hanged," said his mother, as she narrowed off the toe of a sock, and straightened herself with inward satisfaction.

Abel looked discomfited at this disclosure, for he had perfect confidence in his mother's truthfulness.



"I am glad he wasn't any kin to me, for it must be dreadful wicked to get hanged," said Jasper.

"For crime, it is, undoubtedly," Mrs. Grantland condescended to reply; "but Hezekiah Hollinger died in the cause of religion;" and here Hester reviewed the history of the persecutions suffered by the Puritans in England, the landing of the Pilgrims, their establishment in the colonies, and the persecutions they in turn visited upon the Quakers, and wound up by saying, "Thee need never blush for thy ancestry, my son; thy grandsire was one of the first martyrs who laid down his life for the Society of Friends, or Quakers, as the world calls them. Some were burned at the stake, but thy sire perished upon the scaffold. His record was without a blemish, and I wish *thee* may ever be as worthy to have thy name written among the saints in heaven."

Abel did not appreciate the position of his progenitor, but his mother's explanation was a relief to his feelings, and he felt that the stigma of his relative's death had been removed.

Mrs. Grantland had long ago removed Jasper from the cosey little chamber in which she was first domiciled. As for Jasper, she greatly enjoyed the change to the attic. "Sophy Gregg slept there, and Sophy was as neat as a new pin." Then the great dormer-window let in a flood of sunshine that glorified the pine bedsteads and tables, and when the moon shone it was positively beautiful; then she could see far away over the tops of the houses, and on pleasant days, when that same window was open, she could sit there and look up into the blue sky and sing like a bird, and there was nobody to care and nobody to hear. In the strong



light of the attic her faded dress looked much more so, and Sophy's face disclosed many more marks of smallpox, but heaven seemed so much nearer, and what her aunt had intended as a punishment turned out a blessing. Jasper had gotten over the troublesome cough, and Sophy declared "she was running up like a bean-pole and the waists of her dresses would be under her arms after awhile, if she didn't stop; but folks had to grow in spite of old clothes, and Mrs. Grantland couldn't say nothing to that anyhow."

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## CHAPTER V.

THE first years of Jasper's sojourn at Ephraim Grantland's house had come and gone. It was the season when all the air was astir with the delicious breath of May—roses and lilies flung forth their fragrance on the balmy atmosphere; the winter king was gone, and joy seemed to fill the heart of the whole world. An excursion to the woods had been planned for the pupils of Dr. Beckwith's school. The flight of time had worked some changes in Jasper for the better, and she was developing into the tall and slender girl of fourteen; less thoughtless, rather more quiet, yet in the main the same Jasper after all. Her excellent scholarship won the respect of her teachers and the admiration of her class,



and in consequence of this she had been chosen Queen of May.

Having informed her aunt of the honor extended her, Mrs. Grantland asked "whether it was on account of her beauty or her accomplishments?"

"For neither, of course, aunt," Jasper replied, trying hard to choke down the angry feeling. "Indeed, I can't tell why they chose me."

"Neither can I," Mrs. Grantland coldly replied.

This remark amounted to a final decision in regard to Jasper's wardrobe, which did not boast a single dress suitable for an occasion of so great moment, and of course she was compelled to decline taking the rank assigned her. But at any rate she could be a looker-on, and with Sophy's assistance she remodelled her dark winter dress by stitching late at night; and with the snowiest of tiny linen collars and a knot of ribbon at her throat, when the momentous hour arrived she set out for one long day of pleasure. She was yet too young to be aware of the fact that pleasure is ever sure to elude those who go in search of it, and breathless with anticipation she joined the crowd assembled in the great hall of Dr. Beckwith's establishment. She experienced a pang of disappointment as she overheard the whispered comments indulged in on account of her unsuitable costume.

"It is a positive shame!" said one; others, "She looks a black sheep among white lambs;" and even little Bertha cried out, "Oh, do, please, Jasper, go back and put on another dress; I won't love you if you don't."

This caused great tears to come into Jasper's eyes, and



she stooped and whispered, "I have no other dress, Bertha, and if you only love me for my clothes, you won't love me long, for all I have are very shabby, and I don't know when I can ever get any more."

But Bertha was too much excited to take in the situation, and, running away, would have nothing more to do with her. Katie too, who had always been her staunch friend, was entirely taken up with other girls. Jasper began to wish herself at home, but seeing Miss Harrison overloaded with baskets, she went to her assistance, and hoped, by lending a hand to all the necessary arrangements for their departure, to get rid of an aching heart. Who would have thought that little Bertha would have shunned her—Bertha, whom she had trotted up and down on her back many a time when she was almost dead with fatigue—Bertha, for whom she had saved all her apples and every little treasure she possessed in the world! The hot tears would come in spite of every thing, and she brushed them away for fear Miss Harrison might notice how foolish she was. The party was to take the train from the Seventh-street depot, and, after an hour's travel, disembark at Stratford station. A pleasant walk thence brought them to a lovely and romantic spot, not far from which ran a deep, clear stream, while all around were cliffs festooned with vines and purple with the early wild flowers which peeped from under the rich green moss. Arrived at their destination, the girls clapped their hands with delight, and ran about in every direction, doing and saying many extravagant things, as school-girls always will when out for a summer holiday.



Dr. Beckwith declared himself too rheumatic to keep up with the young people, and leaving them in charge of his wife and Miss Harrison, he seated himself on a camp-stool under a spreading tree, and regaled himself with pipe and book.

Professor Reinberg declared he "could not stand de noise ; it did split both ear," and, leaving his commands that Bertha was not to climb the cliff, "she might sprain de *knuckle* or someting," he provided himself with a hook and line, and wandered off in search of a day's sport. The Queen was crowned with her wreath of spring flowers, then there was a swing in a grand old tree which furnished amusement for an hour or so, a jumping rope also was a great resource ; then luncheon came, and the beef tongue and sandwiches, the dainty pies and mountain cake were eaten with a relish which can only be obtained by those who spend a day in the open air.

But "O for a ride on that beautiful river !" There was a little skiff, but no one to row. It was duly inspected by a delegation of older girls, and by dint of hard work loosed from its moorings, but after much deliberation they decided to abandon the attempt, and with great disappointment returned to the swing.

Jasper however took no part in these amusements. She sat alone ; even Miss Harrison was forced to allow that she evinced a very unamiable spirit, and had better not be noticed. She positively refused to turn the jumping-rope for her companions, and Katie Lee had said, "Jasper, if I had



been in your place I would have stayed at home—you look cross enough to turn sweet milk sour.”

This served to gall still further the fierce spirit that Jasper could not exorcise, and she said angrily, “Since you can only say unpleasant things to me, Katie, I hope you will never speak to me again. I shall certainly not inflict my disagreeable countenance on *you*.”

Katie skipped away with one arm around the neck of a girl who had always been at enmity with Jasper, on account of her superior scholarship, and a merry laugh burst from the two companions as they disappeared.

Thus the day wore on until it was time to think of gathering lunch-baskets and camp-stools, and collecting their forces for a return homeward. Just then a shrill voice rang out loud and clear, and all stopped to listen.

“Jasper! Jasper!” some one cried in terrified tones. “Oh come, Jasper—dear, good Jasper, please come!”

All now ran in the direction whence that voice proceeded, and as they reached the bank of the river, a thrill of horror ran through every breast.

There was Bertha in the boat drifting far out into the stream where the current was strongest; with the dam not far below, and no one to help; all saw in a moment she was inevitably lost. Even had Prof Reinberg been present he could not swim, and as for Dr. Beckwith, it was with difficulty he could walk, even with a cane, since his last attack of rheumatism. The agonizing cry grew still more so when Bertha saw the dismay depicted upon the countenances of those who stood upon the bank of the river. There was



the rope with which the skiff had been tied, trailing farther and farther away with no possibility of grasping it, unless an expert swimmer were at hand.

It was the thought of a moment, Jasper tore off her straw hat, and thus throwing aside everything that might encumber her, gave one plunge into the stream. There was a splash, and then she disappeared, and a wail burst from every spectator of the scene. But see, she rises, and now she is striking out for the rope. "She swims!" they all cry out.

"God bless her—she swims!" said Dr. Beckwith, while tears rained down his cheeks.

She nears the boat, the rope is almost in her grasp, and loud cheers break from her companions on the shore.

"But not yet—she cannot quite reach it," they almost whisper, and oh! that cruel breeze, coming so late out of the gorges of the hills laden with the breath of spring flowers, has swept the prize far beyond her. She struggles bravely. And now Professor Reinberg reaches the crowd upon the bank of the river, and as Bertha recognizes her father, she rushes to the side of the boat, which was already filling with water, and stretches her arms imploringly towards him. The boat capsizes! The few seconds that ensued were lapsed into an eternity of suffering, and agonizing cries for help burst from every heart.

"Both drowned!" whispered Dr. Beckwith hoarsely, as Jasper's head disappeared under the water.

A sad, low, murmuring sound came sweeping down from the hills, and one great sob burst from the strong man's breast.



## CHAPTER VI.

THERE was a vacant seat at Hester Grantland's tea-table, and in spite of her assuring her husband that there was no cause for uneasiness—it was just like the girl to be loitering with her school-mates after their return to Dr. Beckwith's—Ephraim looked troubled. He finished his supper in silence, and had just taken his broad-brimmed hat from its place in the hall, when there was a loud ring at the door-bell. He opened the door and listened to the few hurried words of the messenger who stood there.

“I was just about to go in search of the dear child,” said Ephraim Grantland with a slight tremor in his voice. “I will return with thee; in the meantime tell me all.”

His companion gave a faithful account of the sad accident; the capsizing of the boat, the sinking of both Jasper and Bertha, and by the time he had finished his story they reached Dr. Beckwith's house which was situated in the same lot with the seminary of which he was the principal. Ephraim Grantland mounted the short flight of steps, and was met at the door by Professor Reinberg who caught the astonished Quaker in such an embrace that it almost squeezed the life out of him.

“Jasper will live,” said the Professor, wiping his eyes, already red with weeping. “She will live, do not fear! Oh!



she is one noble girl—she did save my little Bertha.” And the little man was compelled to pause for the lack of language to express the depth of his gratitude. With some difficulty he gave an account of the affair in his broken English; described the upsetting of the boat, the disappearance of both Jasper and Bertha; how Jasper the next moment, with head above water, struck out for the shore, but not until she had, by an adroit movement, when diving, run her left hand under the sash of the little girl as she fell from the boat, and thus secured a hold upon her. Bertha was lifeless and made no resistance. Many times Jasper’s strength seemed almost gone, but with hope came endurance, and she finally swam sufficiently near the shore for Professor Reinberg to wade in and relieve her of her burden; it was wonderful; it was miraculous!

Ephraim Grantland listened with attention. He was also informed that Bertha was resuscitated and was doing well, but Jasper was quite ill, and owing to that fact Dr. Beckwith and Miss Harrison would remain with the two girls for the night at the cottage to which they had been taken immediately after the accident. Jasper had fainted from sheer exhaustion when she reached the shore, but fortunately for them, a light wagon came in sight just at that time. Into this she was lifted, and carefully wrapped in an abundance of warm shawls, which had been carried in case of rain. Miss Harrison took charge of her, and held her head in her lap, and after resorting to the usual mode of reviving her, had the satisfaction of seeing Jasper open her eyes when the jersey stopped. Bertha, in the care of others, was left on



the bank of the river apparently dead, but Dr. Beckwith had not given her up. It was a fortunate thing that in the early years of his life he had been a regular and successful practitioner of medicine, and had, on one occasion, recovered a patient who was drowned ; but for this circumstance little Bertha Reinberg would never have opened her blue eyes to gladden her father's heart again. Under the Doctor's treatment, in course of time, she was restored and conveyed to the same house to which Jasper had been taken. It was Ephraim Grantland's intention to see Jasper at once, but unfortunately the evening train for Stratford station had gone out and there would not be another until the next morning at ten o'clock.

"Well, I must bide my time, Carl Reinberg," said Mr. Grantland ; "but if thee hears anything more from the poor child by telegraph, let me know, will thee not?"

Professor Reinberg promised to do so, and Ephraim returned home to let Hester know the cause of Jasper's absence.

The good people who lived in the country house to which the latter had been taken, did everything that could be done for her comfort, but notwithstanding their kindness, she was threatened with a bad night of it. Dr. Beckwith felt her pulse with concern, it was quick and hard, and her symptoms betokened fever. It was very evident the attack was coming on her before the accident. The doctor was a humane man, and could not think of leaving the child under the circumstances. After administering a sedative, he retired for the night, leaving her to Miss Harrison's care, but long



before day he was called to the bedside of the patient. Now she was calling out in wild delirium to Bertha, then to Katie, and sometimes to her aunt, who she imagined was sitting in the boat with folded arms, smiling in derision at Jasper's vain efforts to reach the rope. Dr. Beckwith telegraphed to Mr. Grantland that the case was a serious one and would require watching, and Ephraim went up on the evening train in company with his own physician, for he knew it was important for the head of the school to return to his charge. Days passed before Jasper knew any one about her ; and her young life hung upon so slight a thread that when she began to rally it was as if the spirit had been called again to inhabit the feeble body. She never knew that her aunt came and spoke kindly to her, and laid her cold hand almost tenderly on her burning forehead ; she never knew that her uncle prayed that she might be spared to him, nor did she know until long afterward that it was Miss Harrison who sat by her night after night and held the cooling draught to her parched lips. There was no lack of money with Ephraim Grantland, and he made free use of it in any case of suffering or distress. He seemed anxious that the best of nurses should be employed for his niece, and would not have counted the cost, but Dr. Beckwith knew that it was important that Jasper should be ministered to by loving hands, and who so ready and willing to do that as Miss Harrison ? So the arrangement was made that some one else should take charge of her classes while she devoted herself to the sufferer. The long weeks of suspense and watching at length went by, and Jasper was at last pro-



nounced out of danger. The plunge into the river, Bertha's rescue, all that seemed like a fearful dream ; but the invalid remembered, with a feeling of bitterness, the coldness of Katie and Bertha and the unkind remarks she had overheard from her school-mates. The bare mention of her returning to her Aunt Hester seemed to take away the little strength the patient had gained. She remembered how angry she had felt on that beautiful May-day when every one else was so happy, but surely there was provocation ; she hoped, too, she might never love any one as much again as she had loved her two friends. Jasper could stand all of her aunt's sarcasm better than she could one harsh word from Katie.

But there was something very pleasant in store for Jasper, and she found it out when her uncle next came to see her. She was not to go home when she got well, but to Dr. Beckwith's, where she was to board for a month or two. The reason of this was that her aunt was going to Maine to see an only brother, who was at the point of death, and as Ephraim Grantland had business in New York the house would be closed. The end of the week found Jasper sufficiently strong to be removed to the daintiest of little rooms at Dr. Beckwith's. The chamber opened into Miss Harrison's, and the snowy muslin curtains, the pictures and pretty brackets, all formed a delightful contrast to the bare and uninviting attic in which Jasper slept at home. None of her school-mates were allowed to see her for some days, as she was still very weak and not permitted to sit up long,



but in course of time the restriction was removed, and one morning there came a gentle tap at her door.

"Who is it?" she asked, her heart fluttering no little in the meantime.

"Only Bertha—may I come in?"

"No, Bertha—go away," said Jasper.

"But I want to see you, Jasper, please let me."

"No, Bertha, go away; I don't want to see anybody."

"May Katie come then? She is with me," added Bertha timidly.

Jasper had to pull the bed-clothes over her head, and stifle a little sob before she could reply:

"No. Katie need not trouble herself about me. She must have forgotten what I last said to her."

The door was opened ever so slightly, and a lovely bunch of flowers slipped into a chair near by, and the two girls crept downstairs again.

The next morning there was the same low tap at the door, and the same little voice said:

"Katie and Bertha want to come in."

"You must not worry me, Bertha. I am done with you now and forever, and you too, Katie."

"I wish you had let me drown," sobbed Bertha, passionately, as she threw herself upon the hall floor.

"Don't mind her, Bertha," said Katie, trying to comfort the child, "we won't come soon again, will we?" and Miss Harrison, coming up just then, inquired into the cause of their distress. The circumstances were related to her, and



she felt much concerned, and not a little disappointed that Jasper should have acted in such a manner. Certain things came to mind, also, which Mrs. Grantland had insinuated in regard to Jasper's disposition ; perhaps, after all, her aunt may not be so far wrong in her estimate of her character.

"Perhaps we had best let her alone," thought Miss Harrison ; but was it right ? A still small voice whispered, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness ;" and Miss Harrison decided to continue in the exercise of that patience and gentleness for which she was so remarkable. It had not escaped her notice that Jasper never said the bed-side prayer ; a bitter feeling seemed turning her heart to stone—something must be done about it. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," something seemed to say again, and Miss Harrison resolved that she would no longer remain silent, so bending over Jasper as she lay upon her pillow that night, looking very white and sad, she took the thin face in her hands and said, "Tell me what is the matter, Jasper."

But the white lips quivered, and refused to do their bidding.

"Tell me," said Miss Harrison, with that tone in her voice which older pupils than Jasper had never been able to resist.

Then only was the aching heart unburdened. The pent-up feeling was all out now, and Miss Harrison's kind words encouraged Jasper to still greater confidence. "Oh ! ever since that May-day," Jasper went on, "I have tried not to care for anybody ; no one loves me—God does not, I know."

"Do you love *Him*, Jasper ?"

"I don't know—I think not."



“Do you pray to him?”

“Not now. I used to. I always knelt at my mother’s knee; but that seems so long ago. I am sure God has forgotten me.”

“No, dear Jasper, God has not. It has been said, ‘Love flows downwards, and that the love of parents for their children has always exceeded that of children for their parents. Who among the sons of men ever loved God with a thousandth part of the love which God has manifested to us.’ And if it is a source of grief to you that your young companions have proved unworthy of your affection, do you not think that your neglect of God—your want of love to Him—must be very reprehensible in the eyes of that just Judge who gave you life, and breath, and all things?”

There was no reply, and Miss Harrison followed up her advantage.

“You say you have tried not to care for any one, but as a great author has remarked, ‘The nature of love is divine—that is to say immortal—when we think we have destroyed it, we have only buried it in our hearts.’”

The thin small hand sought hers now, and Miss Harrison felt that Jasper trembled violently.

“Remember, dear, if you fail to thank God for the blessings of the day, and to ask his protection during the night, you are the only one under this roof who has thus dishonored Him.”

Here Jasper raised herself up in the bed, and throwing her arms around her friend, cried out vehemently, “Can you, can you forgive me?”



"It is no matter of mine, Jasper—it is between God and yourself."

"Do you think *He* will forgive me?" she sobbed out.

"Ask Him, Jasper."

The wasted figure slid down upon her knees, and with her head in Miss Harrison's lap, the overburdened heart poured forth itself in prayer. The evil spirit was exorcised, and when Jasper rose up she whispered, "I wan't to beg Bertha's pardon, and Katie's too."

"Not now, dear Jasper," said Miss Harrison, as she kissed her good-night. "To-morrow morning, after a good, refreshing sleep, you shall see them both. Try and get a good night's rest, for there is something pleasant in store for you when you are well enough to enjoy it."

The following day, after Jasper had finished her breakfast, Miss Harrison opened the door softly. Jasper looked up and said, "Have they come?"

"Bertha is here, and Katie is coming," and the words had hardly escaped Miss Harrison's lips when Bertha was in the room and in Jasper's arms.

"Oh, I was just as bad as I could be, Jasper, but I didn't mean it. If you will only forgive me this time, I won't be so foolish again. Just to think you saved my life after I had been so cross to you! If you had died I never could have forgiven myself—never!"

"Don't let's talk about that," said Jasper with a shudder, "only say you forgive me as freely as I do you, little Bertha."

"Forgive!" said Bertha, throwing her arms around Jas-



per's neck again. "Why, my papa just cries fit to break his heart, when he tells about your struggling in the water, and holding on to me all the time. Forgive indeed! I haven't any thing to forgive *you* for, Jess. I don't remember anything after I tumbled out of the boat. Something hit me on the head just then and knocked my senses out, and when I came to I was lying on the bank of the river, and ever so many people crying over me."

"It was fortunate that you were insensible; if you had caught me around the neck, as I was afraid you would, I could not have done any thing for you."

"And just to think Jess can swim!" and the little girl gave her another hearty squeeze.

"I learned how, a long time ago," said Jasper. "I used to have a beautiful bathing costume, and my father taught me to swim and dive like a duck by the time I was eight years old."

"It was a good thing he did; wasn't it, Jess? If he hadn't *I* wouldn't have been here now, would I? Papa says it was very bad for me to have been playing in the boat, but he is so glad that I am alive he hasn't scolded me a bit yet."

By this time Katie came in, and the tender-hearted little thing told with tears of the remorse she had suffered when she thought Jasper was drowned. The reconciliation was complete, and the three chatted away merrily until the school-bell rang, and Bertha and Katie were hurried away by one of the teachers, who promised that they should come again at recess.



Now that Jasper was getting well enough to be allowed something else besides invalid's fare, she was kept supplied with offerings of fruit and dainties sufficient to start a small confectionery. Teachers and scholars vied with each other in showing their appreciation of her conduct, and not a day passed that something did not happen to show her that she was tenderly thought of. One day Miss Harrison entered with a huge pile of music books, and as she laid them one by one on the table said, "Now for my secret :

"This is Mozart—this Beethoven—this Mendelssohn," and she went on calling the names of a half dozen composers as she laid one volume upon another. There they stood in their bindings of crimson and gold, and Jasper's eyes fairly gleamed with an eager desire to examine them.

"They are all yours," said Miss Harrison.

"Mine ! But I do not take music-lessons. My aunt says it is a sin to spend so much money on what is only a pleasure. Oh, Miss Harrison, it is too bad ! The books will do me no good."

"Yes they will. Expense has nothing to do with it. Read this."

Jasper looked at the book now open before her, and saw written in it : "Presented to Jasper St. John by Carl Reinberg, as a slight token of his gratitude."

"And now, read this," continued Miss Harrison, as she drew forth a note written in a fine German hand, in which the professor in his broken English expressed a desire to teach Jasper music, not for one session only, but for as long a time as she needed instruction.



"Oh," this *is* happiness!" cried Jasper, in a tremor of delight. I wonder if it is all a dream."

"But there is more good news, still. Katie Lee's aunt wishes to take you to drive this afternoon, and Dr. Beckwith has consented for you to go."

Jasper, remembering all at once the sad plight she was in after Bertha's rescue, said,

"But my dress?"

"Is all ready," and Miss Harrison opened a pretty little wardrobe and displayed its contents.

"These dresses are yours, and this pretty hat in the bargain. You are quite nicely provided with all that a school-girl ought to have. That good uncle of yours, Mr. Grantland, commissioned me to purchase what was necessary for you, so I used my own taste and see the result."

But Jasper could not see for the film that came over her eyes.

"Just to think," she murmured, "I said *God did not love me!*" and she buried her face in her hands, and the last remnant of her hard heart melted away.

So much good news had a happy effect on Jasper—it was better than medicine. In a short time her eyes began to look less hollow, and a faint tinge of wholesome color crept into her cheeks, until little by little youth conquered disease, and she was pronounced well. How quickly had passed the time in that snug little chamber at Dr. Beckwith's! How cozy and bright it seemed when the girls came in after school, to tell all that had transpired, and to laugh and chat and have a merry time until the bell for study called them away.



Jasper's heart palpitated violently the first day she returned to her classes, but when Dr. Beckwith called her to him, and presented her with an elegant copy of poems, adding that it was the gift of the school, and a token of their admiration of her heroic conduct, Jasper could scarcely stammer out her thanks.

“And to think how I hated the whole world,” she said to herself in the privacy of her own room that night; “how I wished that I *could* die, if only I could make others sorry that they had mistreated me. Oh, suppose I had sunk in the water never to rise again? Once I was almost gone—getting deaf and blind—and I thought I heard my mother calling me, and I tried to answer back, ‘I cannot come, mother—I am not ready. No, not ready for heaven yet,’ and my tongue got dry and would not speak. Then all was dark—so dark!” And thus communing with herself Jasper turned upon her pillow and fell asleep, and dreamt that an angel floated down from the blue of heaven, and, whispering in her ear, “God is love,” bore her far away towards the pearly gates which stood ajar.

Probably every one has experienced, some time or other, an undefinable mental depression upon being suddenly transferred from a circle of appreciative friends, and domiciled under the roof of a person of a cold and ungenial nature. That person may be punctilious in all the little courtesies of life, and yet you will perfectly understand that you are not held in high regard. In course of time the chilling atmosphere which such a person throws around you, seems to



permeate your very soul, until you begin to doubt yourself, and to question whether, after all, you are not a very sorry specimen of humanity. Such was the state of Jasper's mind on her return to Mr. Grantland's. How very oppressive the quiet was! The ticking of the clock could be heard all over the lower part of the house. Sophy was always busy in the kitchen, and Hester seemed to have volumes of writing to do for the Woman's Humane Society. As Ephraim Grantland was more and more absorbed in business, Jasper rarely saw him except at the breakfast or tea-table ; she had not, therefore, been tempted to make him her confidant in regard to the music-lessons. She felt sure that he would only think it kind of Professor Reinberg to take so much pains with her, and to allow her to practice on his own Grand Knabe piano ; but what would her aunt Hester say ? It would be a doubtful experiment to sound her on the subject, so Jasper hugged her secret to her heart in silence, and gloated over the approval of a severe task-master, who declared that he found in Jasper the germ of all that he desired in a musician.



## CHAPTER VII.

JASPER's school days were at last over. She had stepped upon the threshold of womanhood and entered upon that stage of her existence, which, with most persons, is so filled with hopes, shrinking fears, and youthful dreams. Although her training under Hester Grantland's roof had not been such as to stimulate her faith, her reverence, or her affection, she had at least grown up outside of that fashionable world which finds its chief enjoyment in a perpetual round of frivolity. Fortunately for Jasper, the quiet monotony of home, combined with the healthy influence of Miss Harrison, encouraged in her a habit of thought which stimulated her to a higher aim, and aroused in her an intense desire to launch upon life's broad ocean with a purpose. What that purpose would be she had as yet no definite idea, but she resolved to fit herself for whatever path in life God appointed, and to enter upon it with a brave heart and a determination not to faint under the burden and heat of the day. We are told that the secret of man's professional power is that he has an aim. A modern writer has said it must be the same with woman. She need not have a professional career in view, nor need she preside over a "Woman's Rights Society," she may be ever so retiring and unobtrusive, and yet she may have an aim. As to what that aim



will be, she must question her own heart and capabilities. It may be only to fill the humble sphere in which God has placed her, and to be true to her womanhood, or it may be to shed a lustre over some dreary household and cheer the last hours of the aged invalid, still it will be an aim that will strengthen and develop the character while it enlarges the heart. Many a woman born and reared in affluence pines and sickens in a torpid, listless state for the want of an object in life. She had best make use of the talent she has, if it is only for working button-holes. It may be that she will cultivate in that homely work a patience, which may some day grow sublime when applied to nobler ends. It is much better to make use of the small occasions of life, than to sit with folded hands waiting for some grand event to call forth the latent energies. The grand event may never come, or, if it does, one who has neglected the smaller opportunities may not be equal to the greater ones. "Work is better for what it is than what it does." So sings the poet and this is truth. Work is the antidote of morbid thoughts, the medicine of soul and body, and although it may not always be pleasant, it is almost sure in time to produce agreeable results, just as the wholesome bitter of the cinchona tree restores and invigorates the bodily system.

Abel Grantland was coming home from college. The house was in some confusion in expectation of his arrival, and one of the best rooms was being prepared for his chamber. Sophy Gregg had bleached the bed-linen to a dazzling whiteness, and even Hester Grantland had burnt her fingers fluting the snowy pillow-cases. Ephraim Grantland's dar-



ling idea was to establish a branch of his mercantile house in London. This plan was on the eve of accomplishment, and his partner, Mr. Arnold, was even now preparing to sail for Europe. This move was only preparatory towards turning over the London branch to Abel, so soon as he should have completed his education. The world said it was strange that an only son was not settled at home, but then there was money in it, and "money was king." Jasper could not help wondering how the expectant heir would behave toward her, now that she had attained the dignity of womanhood, and inwardly hoped that the teasing boy had not developed into the disagreeable man. But why should she care! She had a plenty to occupy her in her "sky parlor," as she called her room; books to review, music to dream of, and since Mrs. Grantland had turned over to her a huge trunk with the name of Adelaide St. John printed on one end, Jasper found much occupation with her needle. In this same trunk were dresses which had belonged to her beautiful mother, many of them only half worn. To remodel them was no slight task, but it was worth the trouble, for there were soft rich silks and handsome laces a duchess might have envied. It was well that Jasper inherited that mother's exquisite taste, and could finish off things so daintily. The talent rendered her quite independent of the fashionable mantua-maker, and when Mrs. Arnold, who was quite the "thermometer of fashion," saw the tasteful fichus, jabots, etc., that came from the young girl's fingers, she jestingly remarked, "The world had lost a milliner in Jasper." Though never encouraged by her aunt to do so, she often,



from a child, assisted Sophy Gregg about her household work, and Sophy had declared to more than one person that "there wasn't a lazy bone in Jasper St. John's body." Poor Sophy was looking sadly worried; the work had crowded her all day; added to that, the stove was too hot, and had burnt her pies; so, tired out at last, she sat down with an aching head. Just at this moemnt Jasper opened the kitchen door, and said, cheerily:

"What, broken down?"

"Just clean busted up, body and bones," replied Sophy, "and no end of work to do yet."

"Poor, dear old Sophy," said Jasper, patting her on the shoulder. "Never mind—here's a pair of hands to help you."

"Poor little hands," said Sophy, "but they've done me some good turns to be sure; only they are too white—too white."

"Not to set the table for tea," replied Jasper, "nor to cut the bread, nor to sweep and dust, nor—"

"Sweep and dust? sakes alive, there's that room of Mr. Abel's not dusted yet, and he to be here at six o'clock in the mornin'," and Sophy Gregg groaned aloud.

"Oh, well, don't fret," said Jasper. "Sit still and rest yourself, and I will finish up things for you. You've helped me many a time."

"Well, that's a fact, and I believe you may just do as you say, for I am clean knocked up with the heat; but mind you don't slice the bread a shavin' too thick, and mind when you put the silver tea-pot on the table you don't turn



the handle an inch too far to the right—you know Mrs. Grantland is very partikler—and mind when you dust Mr. Abel's room to put the linen pillow-cases on, and set 'em up endways—so—and mind you get all done before Mrs. Grantland comes back."

"All right—I know," said Jasper, as she went into the dining-room and commenced her task there.

It was not long ere she was through with the downstairs work, and, with broom and dusting feathers, went to the newly-furnished room. "It certainly is sweet," thought Jasper, as she opened the door, and passed on to the little study into which the chamber opened. All the neat arrangements of thoughtful affection reminded her that *she* had once been a mother's pride; she also was an only child; but gradually these sad reflections were crowded out by other thoughts, and soon she was singing a low song as she dusted the books and replaced them in their mahogany case. The task was at last finished, and so intent had she been upon its completion that she had not caught the sound of approaching footsteps, neither had she heard the creaking of the door as it opened behind her. She turned, and stood face to face with a young man. As she posed herself in an attitude of dignified surprise, for one moment only was she in doubt as to who the intruder might be. Was it possible? Could it be Abel? Where was the broad-brimmed hat—the Quaker costume? Where, in fact, the Abel of three years ago? In the mind of the latter such cogitations as the following were going on: "A good-looking girl to be sure! A proud-looking one in the bargain. I wonder if she will order me out of



my own room." The two gazed at each other for a second, and Abel was the first to speak.

"I believe this used to be my little cousin Jasper, and as such I claim a cousin's privilege—a kiss."

"Excuse me," said Jasper, drawing back coldly, and simply extending her hand while a faint color crept to her cheeks. "We were not expecting you at this time. I hope you will pardon my intrusion in your apartment."

Abel was baffled, and not a little piqued, but, with an air of assumed nonchalance, replied, "Oh, of course, if your serene majesty will only excuse my existence, which seems to annoy you. In truth, I am out of time, according to the telegram received from me, but the mistake was made by the operator, not by myself. Forget the cause of my unexpected advent, however, and imagine that I was impatient to see my fond relatives, yourself among the number."

"Quite likely," said Jasper, with an amused smile, and starting to leave the room at the same time.

"Not so fast, cousin," said Abel planting himself between Jasper and the door. "Where are you going?"

"To the attic. You have heard of the Attic Philosophers, have you not?"

"Why, yes, but I always imagined each one to be a genius of famine, a superannuated piece of anatomy, while you—but I judge by the bit of color in your face you think I am bordering on the complimentary. Do you continue to inhabit the attic?"

"Yes."

"Why pray?"



"Your mother so arranged it."

"It shall be otherwise."

"I won't move," answered Jasper decidedly.

"You may be all *won't*, but I am all *will*," replied Abel.

"I want the attic myself. We will exchange—you shall occupy *this* room."

"Quite likely," said Jasper again.

Abel folded his arms, and gazing full in her face said, "Are there but two words in your vocabulary? Do you think to please or to pique me by your laconic style of conversation?"

"I have not been thinking of you at all."

"Quite likely," said Abel in turn; "you *have* been thinking of me, and thinking ill of me, what is more; but let bygones be bygones. Suppose we begin life anew—let's be friends."

"We have never been enemies," Jasper replied.

"Not exactly, but there has been a tacit sort of misunderstanding between us. Upon the altar of our reconciliation I tender my thanks also for your tasteful arrangement of my domicile."

"I do not deserve them," replied Jasper, "as I undertook the duty simply to relieve Sophy. Allow me to pass if you please; my aunt has returned and is calling me." But before Abel could move aside Mrs. Grantland opened the door, and ere she embraced her son, darted a stern and indignant glance at Jasper, who passed out as she entered.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was a cloud upon Mrs. Grantland's brow. Abel had left off the Quaker garb. He had also dropped the plain language and never used "thee" and "thou," except when speaking to his parents. Hester had not foreseen that such would be the result of a liberal education, and a more free intercourse with men, and although she said nothing, she felt some apprehension that a taint of the world might creep into her well-organized family circle. As Abel had inherited some of his mother's traits, she now realized that she had encountered a will quite as unbending as her own.

"Thy father is getting old," said Mrs. Grantland, "thee must make ready to take the care of the business off of his hands."

To which Abel replied, "I have no taste for a mercantile life ; there is money enough in the family, and the business had better be wound up altogether."

"But thee will marry some day ; a fortune disappears in long division. When thee marries, my son, choose thee a wife who will be thy help-meet, not one of the dainty-fingered women," and Mrs. Grantland's eyes almost unconsciously fell upon Jasper's hand as she cut a slice of bread for Abel.

"Thee need not concern thyself about the marrying,



mother. I'd as soon be a bachelor as not. Thee had better turn thy attention to mating Jasper," added Abel somewhat jocosely.

"That would be hard to do," said Jasper.

"What, do you mean that you cannot be mated, or you will not be?"

"I mean that I will mate myself," said Jasper, with a threatening look out of her eyes.

"Hoity, toity! what wonderful women come out of the South! How soft the voice sometimes—how powerful the will *all* times! Well, well, we won't quarrel about possibilities, or rather impossibilities, for the victim has not appeared on the *tapis* yet, has he mother?" said Abel.

Mrs. Grantland looked up with a curious expression, but was silent.

The glowing color that mounted Jasper's cheek gave evidence of the struggle within. She left the table and seated herself in the deep bay window in the library. There, with pencil in hand, she proceeded to copy, though with trembling fingers, an extract which had been promised Miss Harrison.

Abel soon joined his cousin, and resumed his bantering tone.

"I admire your taste for books," said he, "but really I think you are too young to write one."

"Do you?" said Jasper with provoking composure.

"Come, put up your pen, you are forever writing. Don't be a blue-stockings. Besides, there is ink on your thumb."



"There was ink on her thumb when I kissed her hand.  
And she whispered, 'if you should die  
I will write an epitaph glowing and grand.' "

Jasper having finished her extract, folded her paper and replaced the book in its case.

"Sit down, cousin, I wish to talk to you. What is your opinion of the career my parents have marked out for me?"

"Women cannot judge for men," replied Jasper evasively.

"Ah, I see you do not take the cousinly interest in me that I do in you. In spite of your indifference I volunteer the advice again, don't write a book."

"There is no danger."

"I beg your pardon; I have been studying the bent of your mind; I fear there is."

"Perhaps you know best then," said Jasper.

"Provoking girl! Do I not see that you are cherishing a mystery? There is too much character about you to lie always concealed under that suppressed manner; your ardent Southern nature flashes from your eyes and carries conviction to my mind more powerful than words. You cannot fool me."

"I do not wish to."

"And you are not writing a book?"

"Of course not. Why do you think so?"

"Because from your tone of conversation I think that you have chosen a career. Woman has but three resources for a livelihood—the needle, the school-room, and the pen. You would prefer the latter."

"Of course, had I the power to wield it."



"Power! Ay, there's the point—but trash is the order of the day in fiction. The novel is the only field of literature open to the effort of woman. Even there she fails if she steps beyond her domain and prates of science and religion."

"I do not agree with you entirely. Woman is eminently fitted to speak of religion. Science she *may* let alone; and the contrarieties of science and religion *all* had best let alone."

"Ah, I see, you recollect our last conversation on the subject. That last sentence was a home thrust."

"Whom the cap fits let him wear it."

"Of course. I adjust it upon my own head with satisfaction; but is it possible that in the contest between religion and science, you mean to say you do not fear for religion?"

"Certainly I say that, and more. Science is travelling she knows not whither; and as a modern writer has said, she knows nothing absolutely and finally, and since even the law of gravitation has been recently called a conjecture, posterity may pity our ignorance on that subject, just as we pity those who scorned Columbus when he said that the world was round."

The approach of Mrs. Grantland prevented a reply from Abel, who was well aware of his mother's intolerance of such discussions. While he played nervously with the ball of cotton with which Jasper was crocheting he therefore resumed his bantering tone.

"And you will not tell me what your plans are? You decline authorship, and you are not to be classed with those



women who enter the great world on a campaign of conquest or an excursion of pleasure. Jasper, you have grown to be a mystery."

"Which only time can unravel," added Jasper laughing.

"There, that was uttered quite naturally. Your countenance lighted up with an expression more speaking than words. The well-shaped head was thrown slightly back—the lips parted with an amused smile—ahem—an item for a novel, if I write one you shall be my heroine, only how should I manage you in the love scenes. What of the grand passion—eh?"

"I will tell you when I have met with an object to inspire it."

"If thee intends to dust thy room thee had better be about it," put in Mrs. Grantland drily. "The clock has struck ten, and Sophy has gone to market."

Jasper was glad to escape from Abel's personalities, and was not slow in obeying her aunt's injunction. Once secure of the quiet of her own room, she drew a long sigh of relief. It was true that she had worked out a career for herself, but her secret had not been confided to any one under Hester Grantland's roof. Was not her uncle absorbed in making money, and who cared what became of *her*?



## CHAPTER IX.

THERE was a piano in Hester Grantland's parlor. It did not occupy its place, however, through any consent of her's. Mr. Arnold had asked permission to store it there during his absence in Europe ; and Ephraim Grantland, who entertained liberal ideas on the subject of amusements had consented. As Hester was out when the instrument arrived, Jasper was asked where it should be placed.

As soon as Mrs. Grantland laid eyes upon the objectionable article of furniture, she ordered its removal to the darkest corner of the back parlor, and as if to exorcise the spirit of music which dwelt in the chords of the instrument, she laid upon its embossed covering the huge Bible of that ancestor who had been hanged for his adherence to the Quaker religion.

No one was ever haunted by such an intense desire to make music as Jasper was at this time. We may attribute this as much to the perversity of human nature as to any thing else, for ever since the sin of our first parents, a thing has only to be forbidden to be desired. She went daily to Dr. Beckwith's Seminary to practice the difficult sonatas in which Prof. Reinberg accompanied her on the violin ; but that was not like having the music all to herself, and her



fingers fairly itched to be gliding over the cold white keys of the grand piano that had been put out of sight.

But the elasticity of youth asserted itself even under these adverse circumstances, and Jasper was buoyed up by a hope which had become the darling wish of her heart. Alas, a day of disappointment came, and her fate seemed decided in a few cold words. The note enclosed her ran thus :

“ I am sorry for the young lady, but the place of governess has been supplied.

“ Respectfully, etc.,

“ J. MANDEVILLE.”

Oh, how cruel and cold the words seemed ! Jasper crushed the letter in her fingers.

“ *Sorry for the young lady !* ” The curl of her lip showed how little confidence she placed in Mr. Mandeville’s sympathy. The expression of intense disappointment upon her countenance had riveted the attention of Abel, and although she did not look towards him she felt the searching gaze of his keen dark eyes as she tried to slip the note in her pocket.

“ A secret correspondence,” he exclaimed, as with folded arms he seemed determined to read her thoughts.

“ Yes, but harmless,” replied Jasper, with an attempt at unconcern.

“ I doubt it,” replied Abel.

“ I do not understand you,” said Jasper, coloring still more under his fixed gaze.

“ Is that really so ? ”

“ Positively, I do not know what you mean.”

“ Take my advice,” said Abel ; “ do not throw yourself



away upon an adventurer. I speak of that fellow Reinberg."

"Reinberg!" exclaimed Jasper, while she laughed until the tears came into her eyes. "The dear old Professor! Oh, how very funny! Who would have thought such an idea could enter your head! Why, he is much more in love with his crochets and quavers than he ever will be with any living thing. No, no, he will never marry again. Even if he did he would certainly never think of me whom he has always regarded as a child."

"I'm not sure of that. Why does he come here asking for you alone and refusing to leave note or message if you are out? He came twice this morning. I offered myself to be the bearer of the *billet doux*; but no—he would return again—he would prefer seeing you yourself. My mother told me some time ago her opinion of the state of the case, and I think she would rather encourage the affair. To be sure it is no matter of mine, but (here Abel colored slightly) you are very young. I would not take a leap in the dark if I were in your place."

Jasper could not keep back the hot, angry blood that surged through her veins. "Matrimony has not as yet come into my calculations," said she; "moreover, I cannot imagine any condition of circumstances that would drive me into a marriage without love. My aunt must excuse me. I acknowledge a warm friendship between Prof. Reinberg and myself, and look upon him as a benefactor; as to his visit this morning, it was in regard to a matter about which I enjoined the strictest secrecy."



These words were uttered by Jasper with a tremor in her voice which was more apparent the more she strove to hide it, and the effort she made to suppress all emotion was not unnoticed by Abel, who listened to her statement of the case in gloomy silence.

To rush into the fresh air and get rid of her angry feelings was Jasper's first impulse after this interview. A brisk walk on a bright cool day is a wonderful antidote to disagreeable thoughts, and after her morning's stroll Jasper returned to Mrs. Grantland's in a much calmer mood, and almost ready to laugh at herself for allowing her excitement to get the better of her in Abel's presence. As she mounted the stairs which led to her own room, she met Sophy with various articles of apparel thrown across her arm. Jasper recognized these as her own, and at the same time did not fail to note that the expression of Sophy's countenance indicated decided disapprobation.

"Where are you taking my clothes?" asked Jasper, stepping in front of her.

"Where, to be sure!" exclaimed Sophy, her rage getting the better of her prudence. "The truth is, I don't know *where* I am a takin' 'em. There's Mrs. Grantland comes to me with her orders, and then there's Mr. Abel comes to me with his, an' both of 'em gone off for the day, an' what am I to do?"

"Tell *me* ; perhaps I can help you."

"What can *you* do? The house don't belong to you."

"But the clothes belong to me, and I can do what I choose with my own."



“ Well, it is this way, ” and Sophy Gregg sat down on the stairs, and with one hand on her side, panted for a moment, by way of letting off her anger, before beginning her story. “ Mrs. Grantland comes to me an’ says, ‘ Sophy, move everything out of the attic.’ Says I, ‘ Where to ? ’ Says she, ‘ Move your own things to the room over the kitchen, an’ the others (she meant yours) to the little room at the top of the stairs.’ Says I, ‘ *That* place ; why, it’s no more than a cuddy-hole ; a body’ll have to go outside of it if they want to turn round *in* it.’ Mrs. Grantland says, ‘ Do as I tell you, and what is more,’ says she, ‘ Mr. Abel wants the attic himself. See you don’t misplace his books and papers when you move them,’ and with this *out she* goes. Then here comes along Mr. Abel. He sees me a movin’ your things in the little room, an’ wants to know what I’m a doin’ with ’em, an’ when I tell him he gets into a towerin’ rage, an’ says they are to be put in the room he has been a stayin’ in, an’ says he, ‘ Miss St. John and myself are going to exchange rooms.’ (Yes, he called you *Miss* St. John.) An’ says I, ‘ I guess she don’t know it, an’ I’m a goin’ to do what Mrs. Grantland told me.’ But what must he do but quietly take all the things out of the cuddy-hole (’tain’t nothin’ else), lock the door to keep me out, put the key in his pocket, an’ tells me to ‘ have Miss St. John’s room ready by the time she comes back,’ and so *he* goes out ; now ain’t I in a pretty fix ? ”

“ Not at all. I’ll take the matter in my own hands. Where did you say you were to move ? ”

“ Over the kitchen, an’ won’t I roast ? ”



“Are there not two beds in that room?”

“To be sure there are, but what good will two beds do *me*?”

“Take my clothes to that room,” said Jasper, disregarding the latter part of Sophy’s remark.

“My goodness, I ain’t goin’ to do it; Mr. Abel would be mad enough to tar and feather me. Didn’t I overhear him tellin’ his mother it looked bad for you to be a sleepin’ in the room with the hired help; an’ didn’t he forbid me callin’ of you Jasper? It must be *Miss* St. John, or *Miss* Jasper. It’s my opinion he’s monstrous set up since he’s been to college. I ain’t got no use for none such.”

All this was a revelation to Jasper, but recovering her surprise she took the pile of clothes off of Sophy’s arm, saying, “If you won’t do what I want you to, I will move every thing myself.”

“An’ you won’t stay in the big bed-room, new papered for Mr. Abel with all the fine fixins in it?”

“Certainly not.”

“An’ you can’t sleep in the ‘cuddy.’ Mr. Abel’s got the key.” But Jasper was out of hearing, and there was nothing left for Sophy to do but to follow the self-willed girl.

This she did, grumbling no little as she went. “Well, they may settle it themselves. It’s all tooke out of my hands. It’s my opinion it was a downright selfish thing to go and take a fancy to the attic, when no end of money had been spent in doin’ up t’other room for him. Yes, I heard him tellin’ Mrs. Grantland, and he wanted more light; that the attic was the very place for him. I don’t believe it. It



was nothin' but meanness to turn out Jas.—yes, I will say it —*Jasper, Jasper, Jasper*—and there's Mrs. Grantland ; I believe she'd have his bed made on top of the house if he wanted it. But my—won't things be in a stew when they come back ! But let 'em fight it out ; 'tain't *my* stew—no, 'tain't my stew. As for Jasper, I don't know what's got into her, neither. She's just a goin' on lately as if she had the world in a sling. Maybe she's goin' crazy. Didn't I read in the paper yesterday of a beautiful girl who had gone deranged and *drowned herself in a black silk dress an' a pair of gold ear-rings*. Jasper won't do *that*, I hope, but don't I remember the fuss about the snow ! Well, poor thing, I won't say nothin' more. No, no, I'll be mum, although she is a lordin' it over me like the Queen of Sheba."

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## CHAPTER X.

THE weather had turned fearfully hot. The room over the kitchen was small, and had but one window in it, and Sophy was snoring so loudly in her bed that no human being could turn a deaf ear to the disturbance. Jasper could not sleep. She tossed about, vainly striving to shut out time—past, present, and future. The clock struck eleven, then twelve—still no sleep came. At one the moon rose, and as it climbed higher and higher in the heavens, Jasper calmed down a little under the faint breeze that stole



through the narrow casement. Her head was throbbing, and her hands were hot and dry, and although the excitement of thought had subsided, she was haunted by strains of music which seemed to chase each other in rapid succession through her brain, alternately grave, gay, and wild. She rose out of bed, and, throwing a light wrapper around her sat at the window. Still those phantom strains went on in her imagination. It was tantalizing, for the harmony was never completed. As a mocking bird will sometimes dash from one cadence to another, never finishing any particular one, so the spirit of music seemed to sport with Jasper's brain and play upon the chords of her soul. Musicians of a highly nervous temperament are often tortured thus in spells of fever, and I have known a lady (who was a passionate lover of music) to be so haunted by a tune as to be driven almost to desperation. The clock struck two; the house was still as death, and not a sound was heard in the street. "Oh, for one hour's sleep!" exclaimed Jasper. But no. That soul music was still going on. Three deep chords of Beethoven's Moonlight sonata scarcely vibrated through her being ere they were chased away by the brilliant roulade of some opera of the Italian school, this in turn to be dispelled by the "mysterioso" of Gottschalk's "Last Hope."

"This is maddening!" exclaimed Jasper, pressing both hands to her aching temples. "I shall go wild!"

She clasped her belt a little closer around her slender waist, and opening the door softly, stole out of the room and down the narrow stairway. Her slippers were loose,



and one dropped off, which caused Sophy to start and stop snoring for a second ; but soon the nasal accompaniment to her slumbers was resumed, and Jasper tied up her slipper and crept on. She passed through the kitchen, then the small room adjoining it, then the dining-room. Here she paused. Mrs. Grantland's room was directly overhead. Jasper pressed her hand to her forehead. "What am I doing? What if I should waken my aunt ! Pshaw ! she cannot hear me ! My uncle is away, and as for Abel, he is sleeping soundly in the attic, and full well I know that sound does not penetrate there from below. I will—I must go on!"

So Jasper opened the dining-room door which led into a long hall. Ephraim Grantland's house was an old-fashioned one. The hall led to a wing quite far removed from the sleeping-rooms, and the aforesaid wing contained the two parlors.

Jasper was at last safe in the front room, where, with firm resolve, she placed both hands upon the silver knobs of the folding doors ; they slid back under her touch. Strange the windows were open in the back parlor. How rash ! It was a great piece of neglect in Sophy. They must be closed at all hazards ; but what if their creaking should rouse the household ? She tried the sash, and the window came down softly.

"Now for it," said Jasper to herself.

She went to the grand piano, unlocked it, turned the stool to its proper height, and took her seat.

She touched the chords softly at first, but gathering confidence, liquid music rippled from her fingers in such a gush



of harmony that she lost all sense of time, place, or danger. The throbbing in her temples ceased ; she laughed for very joy as she gave vent to the soul's phantom strains.

"Now I shall sleep," said Jasper, as, having played her fill, she closed the instrument and retraced her steps to her room.

One, two, three, struck the great clock in Union Square, and Jasper threw herself on her bed and slept soundly, but not too soundly to dream that the spheres were moving to the grand diapason of one of Beethoven's compositions, while Hester Grantland executed a fantasia upon the piano, seated on the crater of Mount Vesuvius.

Jasper felt guilty the next morning. She fancied Mrs. Grantland observed the redness of her eyes, and what on earth had gotten into Abel ? He would not look at her, and scarcely spoke a word during breakfast. Later in the day, however, Jasper came to the conclusion that her fears were groundless. Music was an innocent pastime, except in her aunt's eyes. Why should she not enjoy it ? So night after night Jasper, when all were asleep, stole to the far-off wing of the house and regaled herself with rare and delicious "Nocturnes." She reasoned that even should Mrs. Grantland hear the sounds in her waking moments, she would never divine that they came from her own house, especially as her neighbor over the way was in the habit of indulging in music at all times of the day and night. The moon was growing old ; Jasper must make the best of its light, as a lamp would attract attention. How provoking that Sophy would *not* go to bed ! In reply to Sophy's question as to



whether she was going to undress, or whether she would sit at the window all night with her clothes on, Jasper said, rather shortly, "she thought she would sit at the window," whereupon Sophy rejoined, "Some folks say some folks like to look at the moon because there's a man in it, but for my part I don't care to see one even that far off," and with this assertion she commenced her preparations for her slumbers. Once fairly asleep, Jasper soon heard the signal of safety in her heavy breathing, and took advantage of it to hasten to her enchanted palace. She was growing more venturesome every night, and even had the hardihood to try the accompaniment of a song. Yes, she *would* sing; something seemed impelling her to do so.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what you mean,  
Tears from the depths of some divine despair."

Jasper paused; she fancied she heard a noise; but no, it was only the window-shutter which had turned a little on its hinge. She resumed her song and finished it. Again she heard a sound; there was no mistaking it this time. Some one was in the room, and Jasper sprang from her seat. From the narrow recess between the wall and book-case, which lay in deep shadow, a figure emerged.

Jasper stood in the broad stream of moonlight which fell athwart the floor. She looked like a marble statue in her pure white dress and with her hair coiled in the Grecian style low at the back of her head.

The unknown intruder approached, took her hand. She passively submitted, for so great had been the shock she had not strength to resist.



"Jasper, Jasper ! be not alarmed. Waken ! It is I—*it is Abel.*"

Still Jasper stirred not. While she stood there she realized that her cousin imagined her to be walking in her sleep, and that he supposed her music to be the result of mental phenomena peculiar to the somnambulist.

Why might she not let him go on thinking so. It might save trouble. No, she would not deceive him.

"Jasper," said Abel, with real concern, "dear Jasper, waken. I will lead you back to your room. You are trembling and might meet with some accident. *I will carry you then,*" said Abel, decidedly, after having waited in vain for a response ; and he made a motion as if he would take her in his arms.

"I am not asleep," said Jasper, pushing him off with both hands.

Abel bent down and looked into her eyes to assure himself of that fact. There was no glassy stare about them as is usual with the sleep-walker.

"It was because I *could not* sleep that I came here," continued Jasper, observing that her cousin was silent from profound astonishment.

"And do you mean to say that you possess this marvelous gift at all times, and that it is no freak of a disordered brain ?"

"No gift, but the result of hard study, practice, some talent, and the stimulus of a severe but kind task-master."

"And who was that ?"

"Professor Reinberg."



"Aha, the wretch! And this is the way he has been trying to steal into your heart?"

"No, this is the way he has tried to pay a debt he imagines he owes me."

"And you accept pay for an *imaginary* debt?"

"I did not say so. I accept a favor if it gives one pleasure to bestow it."

"Not always! Jasper, do you hate me?"

"What an absurd question! Why do you ask?"

"Because you have grieved me beyond measure. To make a long story short, I wanted you to come down from your eyrie in the attic, and I feigned a fondness for it myself, whereupon you totally misunderstood the whole thing, and persist in cremating yourself over the kitchen. Atone for this. Give me one more song; I dearly love music."

"Is this a dream?" said Jasper, mechanically allowing herself to be led to the seat at the piano, while she pressed one hand to her forehead.

"Not a fleeting one at any rate," replied Abel, gently lifting the other hand and placing it on the keys.

"Play on; I want one more song, and after that the wild air you played the first night I listened to you."

"The first night! when?"

"The night you found the windows open. I had taken refuge here because I fancied this room was cooler than any other spot. I heard your footsteps, and concealed myself in order that I might spring unawares upon the supposed burglar. I have been watching for you every night since. I



feared that some harm might come to you, but could not resist the desire to enjoy your wonderful music."

Jasper's fingers unwittingly ran into a sad low melody.

"That passage seems to me a musical epitome of my whole life. I want to catch the strain in order that I may carry it with me wherever I go. You know I leave to-morrow for an absence of a month or two. When I return it will be to arrange for my final departure. There! I think I have it," said Abel, whistling an accompaniment towards the finale. "What do you call the piece?"

"It has no name."

"Who is the composer?"

"I am."

"You? It reminds me of a beautiful poem of Faber's," and Abel, seated by his cousin in the moonlight, repeated,

"That music breathes all through my spirit  
As the breezes blow through a tree,  
And my soul gives light as it quivers  
Like moons on a tremulous sea."

"Hush! There are footsteps," said Jasper.

Abel paused to listen. It was true. Nearer and nearer they came, and now they heard not only footsteps but voices, and the next moment Mrs. Grantland, accompanied by Sophy Gregg bearing the light, opened the door.

The countenance of the latter betokened bewildered astonishment, but Mrs. Grantland's face indexed only silent rage.

"Mother, this untimely *tête à tête* was unpremeditated on Jasper's part," said Abel, thinking only of the doubtful position in which his cousin was placed. "I secreted myself. She did not know of my presence until I—"



"A probable story, indeed," said his mother, scornfully interrupting him.

"Jasper, defend yourself," said Abel, indignantly.

"It is not worth while, since she does not believe *her own son*. I will explain all to my uncle when he returns. If *he* understands me I do not care."

"He *shall*," said Abel, too much excited to trust himself to say more.

"Close that instrument, lock it, and hand me the key," said Mrs. Grantland to Jasper with an air of command.

"No, that is my business ; and as for the key, *I* will keep it. I play a little myself, having picked up the accomplishment at college. You see stolen pleasures are sweetest, mother."

Mrs. Grantland turned whiter than the gown she wore, but she knew it was not worth her while to say anything, for her son was in the same humor as herself. Jasper, however, should not escape without severe reprimand.

"Thee intends to throw thyself on thy uncle's generosity, does thee ? We shall see whether thee will succeed. Suppose he should turn thee from his door—what then ?"

"I should work !"

"And who does thee think would have *thee* ?"

"Mother, mother, how cruel ! Jasper, she does not mean it." But Jasper was gone, and Mrs. Grantland followed her out, while Sophy Gregg went back to her own room mentally calling herself an idiot for having roused up her mistress with the information that Jasper was missing—perhaps drowned.



## CHAPTER XI.

ABEL, true to his word, left the next morning to attend to some business for his father in a distant city. Jasper did not have an opportunity of vindicating herself in her aunt's eyes, for Mrs. Grantland also took her departure for the country on the same day. So Ephraim Grantland being absent likewise, Jasper and Sophy were left in quiet possession of the house.

The silence was oppressive, and Jasper was really glad when Sophy came in for a moment's chat.

"What would you give for a letter?" said Sophy, drawing something from her bosom.

"A letter! from whom?"

"From *him*, of course."

"Do you mean Abel?"

"La sakes, no! I mean the 'forriner'—the one that makes the music. He came here this morning while you were away, and I told him I'd take charge of this, bein' as how he had been and been here, and always found you out."

"Sophy, is it possible that you have grown as suspicious as my aunt! Give me the letter; it is only about a matter of business."

Sophy gave up her prize, and Jasper tore open the envelope and read the contents with avidity.

"I will tell you all about it one of these days, good Sophy, only be patient."



"Well, well, I guess I can wait ; but you needn't have got so '*tetchious*,' if I *did* think you had a sweetheart. Most folks *has* at your age."

"Have I been cross ? Well, perhaps when I have a sweetheart my temper will improve—who knows ?" said Jasper, laughing merrily.

"Ah, don't you believe it. Men are an aggravatin' set. But every woman wants to try her luck. Go on, catch 'em, catch 'em ; all I know is, they won't catch *me*, that's certain," and Sophy went downstairs grumbling and talking to herself as usual.

Jasper watched eagerly for her uncle's return. She was particularly anxious to be the first to meet him, and ran to the hall at every touch of the door-bell. At last he came, and as good fortune would have it, 'twas at a time when Hester was still from home.

The old man was quite overcome by the cordial greeting of his niece, and evidently did not know what to make of it for a minute or two.

She rushed into his arms, and then almost dragging him into the library, said, "Uncle, I am going away. Will you give me your consent ?"

"Child, thee tells me what thee is going to do, and then thee asks me if thee may do it," said Ephraim, as he sat down, took off his hat, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"I must—I must," and Jasper threw herself upon the floor and leaned her head upon her uncle's knee.

"Go where ?"



"To the South to teach. Read this," and she thrust the letter into his hand which Sophy had brought her a few days before.

"Who secured thee the place?" asked Ephraim, having read the letter and handed it back to her.

"Professor Reinberg and Dr. Beckwith. They have written to several persons for me."

"And thee wants to teach?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Does thee know enough?"

"Oh, I know a great deal," said Jasper, smiling through her tears.

"Well, dear, a little conceit is necessary to success in the world, I believe; but it won't do much without a considerable foundation:

"What can thee teach?"

"Music for one thing."

"Music!"

Here Jasper, as rapidly as she could, gave an account of the manner in which she had acquired her knowledge of the science, and wound up by saying, "Will you forgive me, uncle?"

"Forgive thee! I should like to hear thee play."

"But I can not. Abel is gone with the key of the piano in his pocket. Uncle, I have done what is a dreadful thing in my aunt's eyes. I could not sleep, and I opened the piano and played. It was two o'clock at night. I thought no one could hear me. I did this several times, but the last night it seems Sophy missed me from my room and told my



aunt. Now, the worst of all this is, that last night Abel was with me, but I had only discovered his presence a few moments before they came in search of me. My aunt will not believe it. Uncle, what shall I do to convince you?"

"Give me thy word, dear."

"You have my word, solemnly and assuredly, and would that my mother's spirit, which I believe is ever at my side, could bear witness to the truth of what I say. Uncle, you will let me go?"

"Thee is young, my darling," said Ephraim Grantland, smiling benevolently on his niece.

"No, uncle, I am old—old beyond my time. I was young when I was nine years of age. I have never been young since. I shall die if I do not go away."

"I thought thee had quelled that proud will," said Ephraim, stroking his niece's hair fondly.

"Call it what you choose," said Jasper, springing to her feet and looking almost wild with excitement. "I am no longer a child. I am going. Only give me your blessing; I cannot do without *that*."

"If thee *will* go, then thee must, and if thee will be happier, I bid thee God speed, but I had thought thee would close my old eyes."

"Oh! uncle," said Jasper, breaking down at last, and throwing herself upon her uncle's bosom, "when those eyes are closed, then my light on earth has gone out indeed. Only bless me and forgive me for all my wayward ways."

The old man pressed her to his heart, and after a moment's silence said, in a hoarse voice, "God bless thee and



keep thee all the days of thy life, my darling. I do not let thee go willingly, for thee is young to try the world alone, but I cannot coerce thy impetuous nature, and if thee will be happier to make thine own living, go. Once again, God bless thee, my child !”

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE letter which Sophy had imagined was the precious missive of some sweetheart proved to be the offer of a situation as governess in the family of Mr. Beresford of Virginia.

As Professor Reinberg had recommended Jasper for the position as a proficient in music, he was made the medium of communication between Mr. Beresford and herself. Hence the Professor's frequent visits and strenuous endeavors to see her alone.

Jasper wrote an acceptance of the situation previous to her uncle's return, and trusted to his mild and gentle nature for sanction. He yielded the point with reluctance. He could not for his life see why a girl of her age should wish to leave a comfortable home and run the risk of being buffeted about by heartless and selfish employers. Her experience would be dearly bought, but let her try it. “A wilful woman maun have her way,” and after all, if she will be happier—well, well, it might be all for the best. So he placed an ample sum in her hand for travelling expenses, and as Mr. Beresford had



urged that she would come at once, she was admonished by her uncle to lose no time in making the necessary preparations for her journey.

In three days all was in readiness. Jasper was not sorry that her aunt was still in the country. But Abel—she would have liked to have told him good-bye. After all, it made no difference—to *him*, at any rate.

The necessity of prompt and decided action soon put to flight all such cogitations, and as Jasper went on with her packing, her heart grew lighter as her trunk became heavier. Sophy was greatly shocked at such a mode of proceeding. “What *would* Mrs. Grantland say when she came home?” Sophy hoped at any rate Jasper wouldn’t get married down South. *She* wouldn’t, she knew. It was well enough to have a sweetheart once in a while, but marrying was a different thing. There wasn’t the man on top of the earth she’d marry—not *she*.

Jasper allowed her to continue her homilies, but went on with her arrangements all the same until finally the day of departure arrived.

Ephraim Grantland was up betimes, and ready to go with his niece to the train. The hasty morning’s meal was eaten, Sophy stood silently by, shedding a few tears, and Jasper was gone! Gone from a lonely house and a dreary life to a life perhaps of thankless toil among strangers. Nothing to regret in the past, nothing to look forward to in the future, yet any change is sad, and Jasper realized this as the train moved off and she sat apart from the crowd and looked from the window of the coach.



A little less than nine years previous she had disembarked at the same dépôt which she had just left. Would she ever return? Who would care if she did not? Her uncle, perhaps, and some few others. She settled herself in a corner of the seat and strove to banish such gloomy thoughts by watching the faces of the passengers. Two or three children were fretting for water, others for oranges, while most of them alternately stood up and sat down, ate cold chicken or apple pie, to the great torment of their parents and the intense satisfaction of the flies, which latter seemed to have invested in Spaulding's glue, so persistently did they stick to their victims.

Directly in front of Jasper a female slept peacefully through the whole of the noise, sublimely indifferent to the fact that her infant of nine months' old yelled vociferously, pounding her in the face with one hand, and pulling her hair with the other.

This was more than Jasper could stand, so, decoying the child from its mother's arms to her own, the little one soon slept peacefully upon a stranger's bosom, much to the surprise of the parent, who roused up presently and commenced looking for her babe under the seat.

After two days and a night of similar experience, Jasper found herself approaching the place of her destination. Now the coach windows were open on all sides, for, far away in the distance loomed up the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains—hardly distinguishable from clouds in the morning's haze.

"Ashwood Dépôt," called out the conductor, slamming



the door behind him as he entered the car. "Passengers for Ashwood Dépôt. Ten minutes for refreshments." (His eye fell upon Jasper.)

There are few places in the world where men are so deferential to women as in Virginia. This springs not so much from any training or polish in schools of etiquette as it does from the noble impulse of the manly heart.

The conductor's eye fell upon Jasper. He saw that she was alone, and quietly taking her satchel from her hand, he assisted her from the train, saw to her trunks, and bade her feel no uneasiness, for a suitable conveyance would soon be in readiness for the remainder of her journey. One touch of the hat and he was back to his post, and Jasper stood hesitating upon the platform.

All around her were seated men, smoking or chewing, lazily discussing the politics of the day, the price of tobacco, or the decline in wheat. At this rural station the world seemed to be standing still, no one was in a hurry, and few seemed to have anything to do. Bags of somebody's "Fine Fertilizer" were piled up as high as the ceiling, "Fertilizers for sale" being printed everywhere.

Idle negroes slept soundly on this commodity, utterly indifferent to the fearful odor it emitted.

As Jasper took in this situation of affairs, she was accosted by a genuine son of Africa who seemed desirous as far as possible to imitate the native chief from whom he was descended by discarding all clothing not positively necessary. He rejoiced in a pair of trousers and a shirt. The texture of this same shirt corresponded precisely with that of the



material out of which the bags containing the fertilizer were made, and Jasper's suspicions concerning the origin of the garment were confirmed when the wearer turned his back, for printed thereon in huge black letters, were the words "*Manipulated Guano.*" In truth, the shirt was nothing but a reconstructed guano-bag, and as the owner could not read, he was perfectly unconscious of the manner in which he had labeled himself, and went about his business as happy as a king.

"Is you gwine off on de Fairy Belle, Mistis?" asked the man of Jasper.

"I don't know. I wish to go on to Chatsworth. Does the Fairly Belle run between Ashwood and Chatsworth?"

"Oh! well, you'se all right. Fairy Belle starts in ten minutes. She'll come up to time; don't be *orneasy*. I takes care of de trunks till dey is put on de Fairy Belle. You can set in de lady's room over dere; stage agent gone to breakfast; be back soon."

Jasper took advantage of the suggestion, and retired to the waiting-room. The odor of the guano-bags was intolerable. "But, never mind," thought she, "the Fairy Belle is coming!" The name was suggestive of tinkling waters and cool and shady glens. How delightful it would be to be "coaching" through romantic scenery in the mountains of Virginia! All recollection of fatigue and inconvenience vanished at the thought, only the ten minutes seemed twenty, so impatient was the traveller to be on her way to Chatsworth.

Several times she went to the window, still no sign of a



conveyance. At last, just as her patience had been tried to the utmost, there was a rumbling of wheels, a cracking of whips, and a "Hip, hip, hurrah! Here she comes!" and Jasper saw her trunk shouldered by the stalwart African, who hurried along the platform with it.

"But where is the Fairy Belle?" asked Jasper as she noticed the man with some concern.

"Why, ain't dis her, Mistis?" he said, pointing to a dilapidated vehicle drawn by two splendid horses.

"Are you sure?"

"Why yes'm; I reckon I ought to know her mighty well by dis time; she's been on de road forty years."

"And this is the Fairy Belle!"

"Yes'm, you may ask any of 'em if 'tain't."

Jasper's countenance fell. The Fairy Belle was in rags, the tattered and faded curtains dangled and flapped in the wind, while the body of the vehicle leaned perceptibly back, as if on the eve of parting company with the running gear in front.

"All aboard, all aboard!" cried the driver, and Jasper was hurried into the stage-coach by the dépôt agent, who came up with his toothpick in his mouth.

If the passenger was surprised at the outward condition of the "Fairy," she was still more discomfited by the internal arrangements, for within all seemed contrived for the express torture of the unfortunate traveller.

The stuffing of the morocco lining was so inclined as to push forward the head, and thus preclude the possibility of an erect position, while the seats were swung so high that



none but a female Goliath could touch the floor, even with the tips of her toes. In giving scope to his inventive genius, the architect of the Fairy Belle evidently had Procrustes in his mind, that famous man of Attica, who laid travellers on a bed, and if their length exceeded that of the bed, he cut it off ; but if they were shorter, he had them stretched to make their length equal to it.

But the whip cracked again, and all were off, bounding and bouncing and rattling along, while the driver of the Fairy Belle sang,

“ O ! carry me back to old Virginia,  
To old Virginia shore.”

“ Going to stop at Chatsworth ? ” asked a shrill voice, which proceeded from the only passenger besides Jasper.

“ No, I—g—o far—ther,” said Jasper.” (The bouncing motion did not favor conversation, and she relapsed into silence.)

The quiet that now reigned in the Fairy Belle seemed to disturb the driver, who was desirous of promoting a more sociable state of things. He therefore turned his head over his shoulder, and looking at Jasper called out, “ Mr. Jones is dead.”

To this Jasper made no reply, as she was not acquainted with Mr. Jones, and did not know he had ever lived, much less died.

After a moment or two another effort was made on the driver’s part. “ Mr. Jeem’s barn is burnt down.”

Still no response from Jasper.



"I reckon you ain't acquainted with this part of the country?" said the other female passenger.

"No, I have never been in *this* part of Virginia," said Jasper.

The driver, seeing that he had gotten things on a more sociable footing, was satisfied; he cracked his whip and resumed the tune of

"Oh! carry me back to old Virginia,"

while the coach bounced so high sometimes as almost to throw him from the box.

Thus rattling and bounding, the Fairy Belle went on for about twelve miles, until, to Jasper's intense joy, she discerned a church spire, and gradually caught sight of a lovely village, encircled by far-off blue mountains.

"Not going to stop at Chatsworth?" asked the fellow passenger.

"No," replied Jasper, "I am going some miles farther."

"Going to Mr. Mandeville's?"

"No," said Jasper, almost out of patience.

"Nor to Mr. Rainsford's?"

"No! I am going to Mr. Beresford's."

"To *Sherwood*? Ah, indeed! well, here we are," said the woman as the stage stopped before a small fancy shop. I get out here. Good-evening."

"I suppose," said she, turning back, "you wrote them you were coming; they generally send the carriage for visitors, you know, my dear. The stage don't go any farther."

But Jasper had not written the exact day she would be in



Chatsworth, for she didn't know, and she now began for the first time to realize the utter loneliness of her situation, as the night was coming on and she saw her fellow-passenger disappear through the glass door of the little shop.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BERESFORD lived upon a baronial estate, and boasted that no railroad ran within several miles of his habitation. There are many such homes in Virginia, and it is astonishing how much their owners are devoted to them. The proprietor of "Sherwood" would not have pulled down or altered his ancient dwelling for any consideration. Had not his father, grandfather, and great grandfather been born and raised there? What if other people were adding to or remodelling their homesteads! What did he care for hot and cold water innovations! He'd much rather have his water brought to his house in pails than in pipes. Didn't he have a whole regiment of little bare-foot darkies with nothing on earth to do except go to the spring? and what on earth was that fine growth of wool on top of their heads intended for if not to set a pail upon? Talk to him about internal improvements—fudge and nonsense! he didn't believe in them! And what if the bedsteads at Sherwood were so high that one had to mount a small flight of steps to get between the sheets! Had not old Col. Beresford, a



hero of the Revolutionary war, died on that same kind of bedstead? Had not most of the ponderous mahogany furniture been handed down to Mr. Beresford through several generations? He wanted none of your fashionable "*gim-cracks*." Give him a good substantial chair intended to hold a man and not a skeleton; a chair should be large enough for two persons if it *was* intended for *one*.

So Mr. Beresford enjoyed the antiquity of Sherwood, notwithstanding the housemaid had to climb a ladder to dust the mantel-piece, and the brass and-irons were fully as tall as the fire-place.

"Sherwood" was worthy of its name. While there was no lack of arable land and an immense stretch of "low-grounds," a noble forest encircled the estate and made up a good portion of the many thousand acres Mr. Beresford called his own.

Sherwood looked lovely in the morning's sun, but there were several other places in the country just as inviting. There was "Oakwood," Mr. Mandeville's place, and there was "Maplewood," Mr. Rainsford's plantation; indeed, it was a pleasant neighborhood in the summer months, when each of these families entertained their friends from the cities.

Sherwood was like a miniature colony, for among the two or three hundred slaves whom Mr. Beresford formerly owned were carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, weavers, shoemakers, field laborers, etc.

It is true Mr. Beresford, with such a force, made immense crops of corn before the war, but his two hundred negroes



ate it up, and the worst of all was, many of the two hundred only had to be taken care of, being superannuated and past work, and others of the two hundred being children, had to be fed and clothed, with the remote possibility that they *might* some day be old enough to work, but with the much greater probability that they would die in the cradle, for despite Mr. Beresford's sanitary measures, the mothers of these nursing infants would slyly feed them on whatever they ate themselves; so it turned out many a little negro child when teething fell a victim to an overdose of hot coffee, cabbage, soup, or cucumbers. Before the war, Mr. Beresford slaughtered hundreds of hogs yearly, besides many beeves, but *they* went in the same way as did the corn. Then there was the tobacco crop. The yield from those broad acres was fabulous, but out of the profits came the taxes and doctors' bills and a thousand and one expenses consequent upon the support of so large a number of dependents.

True, Mrs. Beresford had the satisfaction of saying to her servant, "Do this," and he did it. If one cook was ill, she could order another (as there were five belonging to her), but at the same time she had a perfect knowledge of the fact that while that *one* cook prepared the breakfast, there were four others at home in their cottages doing nothing unless it were eating their heads off, making it just four times as expensive to own a cook as to hire one.

As Mr. Beresford was situated, just so it was with Mr. Mandeville, and Mr. Rainsford, and hundreds of others in the South.



And yet Mr. Beresford was no more willing to part with the "institution" than he was with his tall bedstead, and had about as much reason for holding on to one as he had for obstinately *climbing* into the other.

We have said Sherwood was lovely. It was more ; it was charming ! In these days of steam and electricity, description must borrow style from the concise message of the telegraph operator, or else the writer will pall upon the taste of the ever-hurrying, fast-living, fast-thinking reader of to-day, and the novel will be thrown aside in disgust.

Suffice it then to say, Sherwood was all that a country place should be, with its noble oaks and maples and cedars, its velvet turf, its picturesque herds of sheep and cattle ; and a more enchanting spot could scarcely be seen on the face of the earth than the traveller beheld on that crisp September morning when the village coach stopped before the stately old mansion.

"Some one in the sitting-room, sir," said "Dandy," the dining-room servant to his master as he was about to mount his horse for his daily ride over the plantation.

"Lady or gentleman, Dandy?" asked Mr. Beresford.

"Lady, sir."

"Lady ! how did she come ?"

"In a hack, sir."

"Tell your mistress. The lady doesn't wish to see me, of course."

"Yes, she *do*, sir. She asked for you *expressively*."

With this information Mr. Beresford returned to the hall, and throwing down his gloves, entered the room



where sat the stranger, who rose from her seat as he approached.

The lady wore a neat travelling dress of some soft gray material, and Mr. Beresford knew at a glance that she had come some distance.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" said the gentleman of the house, extending his hand at the same time.

"Miss St. John," said Jasper, rather disagreeably impressed with the idea that he had never heard of her before.

"Ah, yes ; I ask pardon humbly. I remember now ; you are the young lady of whom my friend Mandeville spoke to me. We thought we should have heard at what time you expected to arrive in Chatsworth. Did you come this morning?"

"Only from Chatsworth. I arrived at that point last evening, and for want of further conveyance stopped for the night at the village tavern."

"Indeed ! I am sorry for the delay. I presume your trunks are at the door?"

Jasper replied in the affirmative, and Dandy was summoned at once to see to them.

When Dandy, requiring assistance, went in search of various little negroes over whom he played the uncompromising autocrat, Mr. Beresford disappeared from the room and soon came in with his wife. She was a delicate, soft-voiced woman, and evidently a great invalid. In a kind and languid manner she expressed concern that Jasper should have been put to the inconvenience of remaining in Chatsworth all night. She was sorry the children were out, but she was



not well, and "Mammy" had taken them off *somewhere* to keep them quiet, but "I will show you your room, Miss St. John ; you must need rest after so long a journey," and with this Mrs. B. led the way upstairs through a wide hall, the floor of which was of a dark rich color and oiled and polished to the last extreme.

"*This* is your chamber. Opposite you is that of a young friend of mine—quite an adopted sister. I am sorry that she also is away. She will return before long, however," and with a few more courteous words and a hope that Miss St. John would have a good rest, the mistress of Sherwood left and was seen no more until dinner-time. There was no need of asking where the children were when that hour arrived. "Mammy" had taken them visiting to some of the negro cabins. They had become hungry all of a sudden, and here they came, talking and jabbering, cracking whips, and blowing horns, whistles, and what not, making the old house resound again to their noise. First came "Pink," a girl of nine, next "Rob," a bare-foot six-year-old boy, with curls all over his head, then "Tip" and "Tiny" (the twins), and lastly "Bessie," the baby.

Two servants accompanied this regiment of "infantry." One of these attendants was a stately, dignified black woman, the famous "Mammy," peculiar to almost every Virginia home ; the other servant was "Polly," a negro girl about twelve years of age.

Polly's business was to follow in the rear of her young masters and mistresses, pick them up when they stumped their toes, wipe their noses, brush their clothes, tell them



not to cry, and set them on their legs again. She added sundry other duties to her office, such as keeping them away from hornet's nests, coaxing them not to eat green apples, glass, china, grasshoppers, etc. Indeed, Polly was quite an institution, and "Mammy" said she herself "would be run to death if it wasn't for Polly."

As the children passed in review before Jasper, Mr. Beresford called out one after another by name, evidently proud of his little family, and feeling that the governess of such a parcel of children ought to be as happy as the day was long. They were not allowed to go to the table, however; they were too noisy. Mrs. Beresford's head was aching, and, besides, there was a gentleman to dinner, so Tip and Tiny, as well as the others, were provided with ample slices of bread and butter and told to wait.

And now as Jasper stood behind her chair she took in at a glance the bountiful table, the old-fashioned silver and cut-glass, the negro man whose business it was to keep the flies off with an immense bunch of peacock's feathers, while the family enjoyed the chicken pie, corn-pudding, roast mutton, etc. Yes, Sherwood was celebrated for its good living, and, upon the whole, black and white had a good time there and took life easy.

But Jasper's thoughts were withdrawn from the table upon the entrance of two persons whom she had not seen before. One of these was introduced as Miss Frothingham, the other as Mr. Rainsford. They were now all seated, and the conversation became general as well as genial.

To say that Avis Frothingham was beautiful would not



describe her, and yet she was considered the embodiment of all loveliness. According to the rules of classic style, her features were defective, but the witchery of her expression, added to the large, lazy-looking, dark eyes, the profusion of golden blonde hair, that vine-like and with a fascinating *abandon* wreathed her forehead—all these, added to an almost childlike grace, were far more winsome than regular Grecian beauty.

“Did your ride fatigue you, Avis?” asked Mrs. Beresford in course of their discussion of the morning’s amusement.

“No, darling—that is—not very much. Zephyr was a little restive on account of the flies, but Mr. Rainsford joined me and relieved my mind of the fear that there would be no one to tell if I should be run away with.”

Mr. Rainsford said nothing in reply to this delicate little inuendo that his company had been acceptable, and Avis, with infinite tact, launched into another subject.

Sidney Rainsford was a brilliant man when he was in the vein, and if he was silent it was not because he was at a loss for anything to say. His birth, bearing, and ability would have procured him an entrance into any circle, but he rarely availed himself of that fact. Added to a certain high-born *Je ne sais quoi*, his face was a study, and Jasper thought the tall, dark Virginian looked down rather patronizingly on Avis Frothingham, as with all her conversational powers she endeavored to awaken his interest and retain his attentions.

But the dinner was nearly finished, and the children were getting impatient, as was evinced by the fact that they were



far from quiet, and *would* peep in at the door in spite of Polly's efforts to prevent.

And now came on the dessert, and Dandy, with all the flourish of an expert in such matters, placed the far-famed Sherwood cheese-cakes before his mistress. All had gone on well until that moment. Mrs. Beresford was congratulating herself that the children had behaved so sweetly ; but alas ! this last move was the last feather upon the camel's back ; it was more than human flesh in the shape of " Tip " and " Tiny " could endure ; so by a rapid and dexterous flank movement they advanced upon their mother, each quietly appropriated a good-sized pie, and then disappeared as fast as feet could carry them.

" Tip, darling—Tiny, my dear !" said Mrs. Beresford in a deprecating tone—" Mr. Rainsford, Miss St. John, do excuse them, Mr. Beresford does spoil them so."

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

ALTHOUGH Jasper had not yet undertaken all of her duties as governess, she had become quite well acquainted with the children in the course of a few days. She found Pink to be of a bright, happy, affectionate nature, loving music and everybody that made it ; consequently there sprung up at once a bond of sympathy, a kind of free-masonry, between herself and Pink. We have already had an insight into the



character of Tip as well as Tiny; as in the case of the cheese-cakes, just so in all other emergencies did they prove themselves to be indefatigably enterprising and mischievous. "Rob the Rover," as he was nick-named, was of an exceedingly migratory disposition. Upon getting angry with Mammy on one occasion, he had started to run off to South Carolina, but, changing his mind, climbed to the top of a tall oak tree, from which perch he could not be induced to descend until the almost frantic Mammy promised to bring him a candy elephant as large as himself the first time she went to town. Since the advent of the last travelling circus to the neighboring village, Rob had stood so incessantly upon his head that his hair was filled with "trash," and his mother, as well as his nurse, threatened that he should be shorn of his golden ringlets if he didn't reverse his position.

Bessie, the baby, had not developed any peculiarities beyond saying "*blackberry jam*," which was considered a remarkably hard word for a child of her age, and when, in the course of a few months, she acquired sufficient command of language to pronounce the words "*buckwheat cake*," Mammy thought her reputation as a prodigy fully established. Jasper was busy in her own room one day, dusting and arranging her wardrobe, when some one tapped at the half open door, and said, in a hesitating whisper, "May I come in?"

The assent being given, in walked Mammy in her whitest apron and gaudiest handkerchief, the latter being wound about her head somewhat after the fashion of a turban and tied in a knot with two ends low at the nape of her neck.



"Well, here I am at last," exclaimed she. "The baby has just '*drapped*' off to sleep, and I thought I would come in and see you for a few minutes. Well, honey, how you do? I've been trying to get to see you ever since you came. Bless your heart, how you do?"

"I am quite well, I thank you," said Jasper, extending her hand, but not a little puzzled as she did so.

"La, honey, you don't know me," said Mammy.

Jasper was forced to acknowledge that she had but a slight acquaintance with her.

"Well, I knows *you*; I aways knows '*royal folks*' when I sees 'em," said Mammy, straightening herself with an air of dignity.

Few persons except those who have been raised in the South are aware of the fact that the language made use of by the servants of the household is very different from that of the laboring hands.

As a race, negroes are exceedingly imitative and fond of display, and when they were slaves the height of ambition among the ladies' maids and "mammies" of every old homestead was to imitate the manners, carriage, and conversation of the mistresses whom they served. Often the attempt was a failure, or rather a burlesque, for high-sounding words were frequently used with an utter disregard to their meaning, or with a bearing directly the opposite of their import; but the effort nearly always resulted in a certain sort of polish, and even elegance in some instances, which placed those who attained it immeasurably above the lower class of white people.



“ Yes, indeed,” continued Mammy, “ I always knows ‘ *royal* ’ folks when I sees ’em. Why, child, I knowed your father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before you ; you are the very ‘ spit ’ of your father. And you never knowed Mammy ! My name is ‘ Kizzy ’—Aunt Kizzy ; the children calls me ‘ Mammy,’ you know, because I’s raised ’em—yes, *bodilaceous* raised ’em since they were no bigger than a coffee-pot. And you don’t know Mammy—well, well, well ! Why, child, your folks were grand people. I remember when they owned houses and lands and horses and dogs and ‘ niggers ’—why, I remember when their plantations were just *illuminated* with ‘ niggers.’ ”

“ Do you ? ” asked Jasper, becoming suddenly very much interested.

“ That I do ! and I’m the only one is living as remembers it.

“ Yes, I remembers the St. Johns and the Worthingtons, and when old Governor Worthington used to come up to the Virginia springs from way down in South Kalina, *imputation* on top of *imputation* used to come for him. Everybody wanted him to dine ; yes, I remembers it, and I remembers, too, the great lawsuit about Governor Worthington’s property, and how after his death it wasn’t given to the one that it ought to belong to ; but you know all about that, don’t you ? ”

Jasper said that she did not.

“ Don’t know about the lawsuit ? Why, mussy on me, where have you been, child ? ”

“ I’ve lived with Quakers since I was very young,” re-



plied Jasper. "You know they do not believe in going ether to law or to war."

"You don't say so! Well, 'bout Governor Worthington's property, it was this way—but, honey, I must sit down.

"Do," said Jasper, placing a chair for Aunt Kizzy.

"As I was saying, this was the way of it," and Mammy resumed the thread of the story:

"Way back yonder, Gov. Worthington's folks were F. F. V.'s—that is, 'first families of Virginia.' They'd always been used to their own niggers, and my mother was one of 'em, and has often told me all about it. Well, one branch of the family went to South Kalina, and there was born the Gov. Worthington I am talking of. Presently another Worthington was born, and they called him *Roscoe*. He was the brother of the Governor, Roscoe was; and when he grew to be a man, he bought him a plantation in Virginia and moved back there."

"What was the name of the Governor?"

"The Governor was named Wallace. Wallace and Roscoe were the two brothers. Well, in course of time Governor Wallace Worthington marries Mrs. Marchmont's only daughter, by whom he had one only son, and that son was called *Marchmont Worthington*. About the same time Roscoe, the one in Virginia, gets married. Let me see, who did he marry? La, child, I forget; but never mind, anyhow, he too, had one child and that was a daughter. Hush, wasn't that the baby?" said Mammy, listening for a moment. "No, 'twas Tip blowin' of his whistle. Where was I in my story?"



“ You were telling of the two Worthington brothers and their two children.”

“ So I was. Well, Mammy’s gettin’ old, child ; she forgets more than she knows :

“ Well, Mr. Wallace Worthington’s wife died after a while, and he never married again, and never had but that one son, Marchmont. Well, I’m comin’ to the sad part of the story. You know Governor Wallace Worthington used to come to Virginia every summer to see his brother Roscoe. They was all that was left of their family, and was monsaus, monsaus fond of one another. Now Wallace had spent the summer in Virginia, he and his young son March, as they called him, and they started back to South Kalina in the fall, and stopped a while in Richmond to see a grand play that was to come off at the theatre. Folks from away off yonder went to it, for it was goin’ to be somethin’ uncommon, and there was no end of talk about it. Well, that night the theatre took fire—and, child, it makes my hair stand on end to think of it ; there was a sight of people, grandees and all, burnt alive or smothered to death. You see, the doors all opened inside, and the crowd rushed agin ’em, and the only way to get out was through the windows, and they couldn’t be opened fast enough, and the black smoke from the pine wood and paintin’s was stiflin’, and people were scramblin’ and climbin’ over the dead and dyin’, and many of them were their best friends. Oh ! it was awful !

“ Well, some got out, to be sure, and among ’em was seen (some folks said) the young boy “ *March*, ” others said it was



some one very much like him. Anyhow the next day March was *not* to be seen, and folks said he went back in the theatre and couldn't get out. But that wasn't much like a boy twelve years old I say. I dunno how it was, but, anyhow, that was the last seen or heard of the South Kalina Worthingtons. Their bones was buried under the big monument before the Monumental Church at Richmond, and you can see the name of father and son right there.

"And then the question was, who did Gov. Worthington's property belong to? You see he had no kin when livin' but his one son and one brother, but as soon as he was dead the heirs started up on all sides till the lawyers said their never was so much mitigation in the world before. At first it was thought father and son must have suffocated at the same time, but after a while some folks swore they saw the boy when everybody inside, where the father was, must have been dead. So as the *boy was seen last*, the property went to him, then through him back to his grandma (his mother bein' dead). Now his grandma was his mother's mother, not his father's, and when the grandmother died she left it to her sister, Mrs. Marchmont, and that sister was no kin to Gov. Worthington, and didn't know him from a side of sole-leather, for she always lived away over yonder in Europe somewhere. Now it did seem strange for it not to go to Gov. Worthington's own brother, when he was a livin' too, but folks said it was accordin' to the law of South Kalina, and so it *went*. Now one of the heirs ain't so very far off from here, and just guess who it is?"

"Mr. Rainsford?" asked Jasper.



"One of 'em I know," continued Mammy, "and the strangest part——"

"Mammy, Mammy," shrieked Tiny. "Mammy, Rob went and shut—my nose up—in the bureau-drawer," yelled Tiny, gasping between every two or three words.

"He shut—my—nose up in the bureau-drawer—an—an," and Tiny ran shrieking into Jasper's room.

"La, child, ain't here your nose right on your face?" said Mammy, soothingly.

"He did—he shut my—nose up in—the bureau-drawer," yelled Tiny.

By this time Rob rushed in.

"I didn't any such of a thing," screamed Rob. "I opened the drawer to get my ball, and Tiny went and stuck her nose in, and I didn't know it, and shut the drawer."

"He did—he did," cried Tiny; and Mammy, after reprimanding Rob, went to the nursery, where she soothed the precious Tiny on her bosom, who went to sleep sobbing "He shut—my—nose up in—the—bureau-draw."

Tiny having been put to sleep, Mammy returned to Jasper's room for the purpose of resuming her story.

"Well, well, where was I?" said she, seating herself again.

"You said one of the heirs was not so far off."

"Oh! yes. The property all went to the boy's grandmother on the mother's side, cutting off the Worthingtons in Virginia *entirely*; and from the grandma it went to the *Marchmonts*. Well, Governor Worthington had a friend named Faircastle. He was a great lawyer, and a member of



Congress from Virginia, and the two were like brothers—*mighty* intimate.

“After Gov. Worthington’s death, Lawyer Faircastle volunteered in the case, and tried his best to get the property for the Governor’s brother, but couldn’t, and they tell me Lawyer Faircastle wore himself out on it, and when he died he made his son and his grandson (you see he was *mighty* old, for he ain’t been dead so very long)—he made ’em vow they’d worry at it if it took ’em a lifetime and no end of *mitigation*, for he thought Gov. Worthington’s money ought to belong to a Worthington and not to a Marchmont, who was no more to the Governor than a side of sole-leather; and now I tell you—”

“Mammy, baby’s done waked up,” said Polly.

“La, child, I never will finish; but never mind, I’ll tell you all about it some of these times. I know it by heart. I learned it when I was a girl like Polly, and my old master used to give such big dinners during the Spreem Cote, and the lawyers and the judges used to come out to dine, and there was no end of *argufying* and *sputifying* over the mitigation in the great *Worthington* and *Marchmont* Law Case. And now,” continued Mammy, lowering her voice, “I’ve got in my *procession* somethin’ as belonged to Gov. Worthington. My mother gave it to me on her death-bed, but no Marchmont will get it; none but a Faircastle, if I ever sees one.”



## CHAPTER XV.

AVIS FROTHINGHAM was an orphan. Little was known of her father, Col. Frothingham, except that he had met with his beautiful American wife during her travels in Europe. There were many conjectures as to his nationality, and these conjectures finally ended in the conclusion that he was an adventurer. His wife had several children, all of whom died during their infancy except one. That one was Avis.

Mrs. Frothingham fell a victim to consumption at the age of twenty-seven, leaving the little Avis motherless when only five years old. Col. Frothingham survived his wife but one year. He was mortally wounded in a duel between himself and a brother officer in France, but lingered long enough to consign his only child (Avis) to the care and guardianship of a friend of his wife's in America; that friend was Mr. *Tipton Tracey*, the father of Mrs. Beresford. As Avis grew to womanhood, education did much for her, but nature did more. Added to an exceedingly refined and delicate physique, she was gifted with a charm and fascination of manner which, if indescribable, was equally inimitable.

Many really worthy men swelled the list of her suitors, over whom she ever succeeded in maintaining an easy and graceful sway, notwithstanding they received the fatal "no,"



which precluded the possibility of their being nearer or dearer than friends.

Miss Frothingham's preference for the retirement of Sherwood during the summer, instead of the *éclat* of being the reigning belle of some fashionable watering-place, was considered somewhat of an eccentricity.

The gossips endeavored to account for it by declaring there was "a method in such madness:" that exquisite complexion could not stand the ravages of late hours at balls and operas in the city during the winter season, unless repaired by perfect rest, retirement, and healthful breezes.

Whether this was so or not, after a few months in the city during the winter, Avis was pretty certain to seek again her highland retreat, and pretty generally was followed too by the victims of her winter's campaign. But if her object was to renew her color, it was also to preserve her health.

Her mother had drooped in the perfection of her bloom, like a beautiful white lily; and Avis, knew, alas! too well, that to herself had descended the heritage of an extremely fragile constitution. But to do Avis justice, there were other reasons why she sought the cool shades of a far-away Virginia homestead. She loved the country, loved trees, flowers, birds. Loved horseback exercise, loved to be untrammelled, and loved her genuine, true-hearted, unpretending friends, the Beresfords.

Although she was hardly aware of the fact herself, there was within her an innate craving after something truer, nobler, more enduring than the artificial glare in which the butterfly of fashion singes her wings.



Alternating thus between retirement and the gay world, she lived up to the twofold nature she inherited, namely, that of frivolity from the father, and true and lovable womanhood from the mother.

It was a noticeable fact that Sidney Rainsford was a much more frequent visitor at Sherwood when Miss Frothingham was there than when she was not. Was this hitherto invulnerable, platonic man about to swell the number of her worshippers? Some said yes and some said no, while all predicted that whom he sought he would win. He was a man one did not meet with often in a lifetime.

So this tall, dark Virginian, this specimen of the "old noblesse," around whom seemed still to linger the halo of romance which characterized the cavaliers of England from whom he was descended—this hero had actually been seen riding with Avis Frothingham. A handsome pair they made too, and a striking contrast they were indeed—he on his fine Arabian steed Prince, and she upon her high-mettled horse Zephyr, which lifted his feet and put them down as daintily as if he feared polluting his hoofs with the rich Virginia soil he trod. There was nothing which surpassed the grace of his motions unless it was the grace of his mistress.

No wonder Jasper's fellow-traveller (the owner of the fancy shop) stepped over the head of her two-year-old child as it sat in the door eating bread and molasses; no wonder she forgot her child, herself, and her shop, in her frantic efforts to get to the front to see Miss Frothingham and Mr. Rainsford go by on horseback.

Then could be heard such comments as these: "He'll



die game ! There never was a Rainsford yet that didn't ;" or, " She'd better not be too sure of her prize ; there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip ; for, after all, the Rainsfords are a tough set of men, and go more for worth than wealth. But stranger things have happened." So the outside lookers-on made up their minds to accept the situation, and not to be surprised at any thing that might occur.

Meantime Mr. Beresford was glad for Avis to draw Rainsford out. He was entirely too quiet for a man of his parts ; but no wonder—he persisted in leading a bachelor life, moped up in that grand old mansion of *Maplewood*, with no one but his servants.

And of what avail was it to Sidney Rainsford politically if he did once in a while give such an exhibition of his talents as to bring down the plaudits of his mother State?—what good did it do, when he went back into retirement and buried himself at *Maplewood* for six months afterwards !

Mr. Beresford was out of patience with him ; Virginia had need of such men ; he owed it to his State to become a leader, and he owed it to the name he inherited to throw the weight of his influence at the feet of the best country upon the face of the whole earth—the long-silent, long-suffering mother-land, the " Old Dominion."



## CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was something delightfully natural and amusing to Jasper even in the mischief of the Sherwood children. Probably this was owing to the fact that she had been for nine long years in a house where no child's voice was heard. To watch their ways, to interpret their infant prattle, to note their little sorrows and their joys, was to Jasper like reading from a new leaf in nature's book ; and her home was so much brighter than Hester Grantland's, that her heart lifted itself up in thankfulness that her "lines had fallen in such pleasant places."

Jasper was not by any means over-indulgent. There was much of which she was obliged to disapprove, much to correct, much to prune away ; for a nervous, delicate mother, who is obliged to turn over her children to the care of servants, will find out to her sorrow some day that those children have not been trained up in the way that they should go. So Jasper studied her pupils as she would have done a book, and soon learned them by heart.

Pink was of a loving, gentle nature, and no trouble. Rob had his faults and was at times irrepressible, but he was generous and forgiving, with a heart fully as large as his little body could carry. Tip and Tiny were the youngest, and required the most management.



At first, mournful lamentations were raised for very slight punishment, namely, having to remain in the school-room a few moments longer than usual, or standing in a corner with the face to the wall ; but in course of time Rob discovered that running off was not the best way to get along in the world, and Tip and Tiny found out that stealing the matches and kindling a fire under the bed in the best company room in the house was not the surest road to happiness.

“ Poor darlings,” said Mrs. Beresford, “ they *have* been spoiled ; but really I have so many servants to look after, so much company to entertain, and such poor health with it all, that I have not been able to do much else but nurse the little things and turn them over to Mammy. I hope they will all come right some day ;” and Mrs. Beresford enumerated various instances of children who were much less controlled than hers—children who finally grew up to be all that their fond parents could wish.

As for Rob, his mother felt sure he would become a clergyman. “ Had he not been discovered standing upon an inverted clothes-basket, robed in her best night-gown, haranguing the little negroes, whom he made stand up or kneel down, as the notion took him. His text showed decided originality ; it ran thus :

“ The outside is the inside, and the inside is the outside ; and them that knows it believes it, and them that don’t know it don’t believe it.”

Mrs. Beresford imagined it was a commentary upon the discourse of a celebrated divine of her acquaintance, who was noted for his metaphysical powers.



Mother and father were divided in regard to the future of the heir of Sherwood. Mr. Beresford thought he would be a lawyer, because he wished him to be. In truth, Rob had decidedly an argumentative turn, which was proved on the occasion of his stumping his toe, at which time he ran, crying, into the library for sympathy in his misfortune.

"What, my boy! have you stumped your toes?" said Mr. Beresford. "You mustn't do that; you will stump them off, and then you can't run."

"Yes I can," replied the infant, suddenly drying his tears and rubbing his eye with one corner of his fist, as if winding up the flood-gates of his grief. "Yes I can. Horses, they runs, and they haven't got any toes."

"That boy is going to be a lawyer," said Mr. Beresford, striking his fist upon the library-table. "I only hope he may follow in the footsteps of his illustrious grandfather."

So while one parent predicted that he would enter the church and another that he would distinguish himself at the bar, Rob quietly made up his mind to become not only the driver, but the proprietor, of the celebrated "Fairy Belle," with its superb horses, which plied between Chatsworth and Ashwood Dépôt.

He had already lost his heart with Jasper, as he proved by wearing his shoes and keeping his face cleaner than he had ever done before.

"It really does seem like magic," exclaimed Avis Frothingham, after Jasper had been at Sherwood for some time; "you have revolutionized these children; even Mr. Rainsford has observed it."



"Has he?" replied Jasper, evincing by her earnest manner how intensely she was gratified.

"Indeed he has. Pray tell me in what way you have bewitched them?"

"I don't know," said Jasper, hesitating; "perhaps it is partly because I love them."

"What is the topic of conversation?" inquired Sidney Rainsford, who, having heard his name called, came up just at this time.

"Miss St. John was saying that the secret of her success with the children was probably owing to the fact of her loving them," said Avis, taking it upon herself to explain.

"Undoubtedly," exclaimed Rainsford, seating himself by Avis. "I approve of your mild but firm policy, Miss St. John. My mother exercised the same toward myself. If she had not done so, I fear I should have been a reckless, good-for-nothing waif by this time. These little embryo men and women are gifted with an instinct which very soon tells them who are their true friends, and they are equally quick in discerning any lack of affection or interest on the part of those who have the care of them; but I should think, Miss St. John, the quality in which *you* particularly excelled was patience."

"Why so?" asked Jasper, looking up from the delicate piece of lace-work on which she was engaged.

"I must not specify time or place, which brought me to such a conclusion, else I shall have no more opportunities of taking notes."

"Notwithstanding your reticence, I strongly suspect you



of eavesdropping during some of my music lessons," replied Jasper, once more turning her attention to her fancy-work.

"You shall not extract my secret from me by any such insinuation," said Mr. Rainsford; "but I think I shall put your patience still further to the test," he added, changing his seat at the same time.

"In what manner?"

"By begging that you will play for me once more that air I liked so much last evening."

"With pleasure," said Jasper, laying aside her work and going at once to the piano.

"You know what piece I mean?"

"Certainly." And Jasper, having adjusted the stool to her height and requirement, now brought forth a shower of music with her deft fingers, while her hands seemed to chase each other from one end of the row of ivory keys to the other.

"Now, Miss St. John, how can you do so?" exclaimed Sidney Rainsford. "I did not ask for any of your musical gymnastics."

"I know," said Jasper, laughing a little, "I am only getting myself in tune. Now listen," said she, swaying her head and body slightly to the music as she merged into the tune.

It was a remarkable coincidence that the melody was the same which had attracted Abel's attention.

"Thank you," said Mr. Rainsford, when Jasper had finished it. "Will you tell me what is the name of that composition?"



"It has none."

"Has no name!—has it no composer either?" said Mr. Rainsford, with an intuition of who the real author was.

"Of course it has," replied Jasper laughing, and slightly confused; "but the author is not one of any reputation."

And now Mr. Rainsford smiled, with a perfect understanding of how the case stood.

"Well, your melody is deserving of a better fate," said he. "May I name it?"

"Certainly, I shall be most happy."

"We will call it, then, '*The Prayer of the South*,' said Sidney Rainsford; and his face grew suddenly grave, and he seemed lost in deep thought for a few moments; then rousing himself he added, "There is something indescribable in the effect of that melody. Pray tell me, Miss St. John—that is, if you do not consider it an impertinent question—what suggested the air?"

Sudden and bitter recollections caused a film to bedew Jasper's averted eyes, which Rainsford did not fail to observe.

Recovering herself she said, "I was in trouble, and could not sleep."

Sidney Rainsford silently revered her for her honesty, and with true delicacy tried to dispel the thoughts which he found out he had roused up by his malapropos question, and Avis joining in, there was a momentary sparkle of wit between the two on the subject of the idiosyncrasies of composers.

"May I look at that collection of Mendelssohn's?" asked Rainsford, again directing his attention to Jasper.



"Certainly," she replied, handing it to him. "It was presented to me by a dear friend many years ago, and is a little the worse for wear, as you will perceive."

Sidney Rainsford turned over the leaves carelessly for a while, then closed the book, but as he did so his attention was arrested by the name upon the back.

"Jasper St. John!" he exclaimed. Then taking from his pocket a small Russian-leather wallet, such as gentlemen frequently use, he added, "I had that name brought to my attention some years ago;" and he drew forth a card upon which was written in pencil the name of "Jasper St. John."

"How singular!" exclaimed Avis. "How can you explain such a coincidence, Mr. Rainsford?"

"I was in the North some years ago," replied Sidney. "I cannot say exactly how long since, but I was scarcely more than a youth, that is, eighteen or nineteen. You see I am old enough to be indefinite. Well, as I was saying, I was North, and had occasion to take the Philadelphia train. On that train was an old gentleman, a Quaker of striking appearance and benevolent countenance."

Jasper's interest now became awakened, as she showed by the kindling look which shot from her gray eyes and her attitude of earnest attention.

Mr. Rainsford continued his story: "Under the care of that gentleman was a child, with whom he hardly seemed to know what to do, for he scarcely withdrew his vigilant eye from the sprightly, restless little creature during the whole journey. I think he felt some serious apprehension that she might get away from him and ride either upon the engine



or the cow-catcher. The child, however, seemed worn out at last with her own activity, and fell into a profound sleep, much to the relief of her Argus-eyed guardian. In the meantime a snow-storm raged, and just as we reached the city the gale became furious. As we neared the *dépôt* passengers hurried toward the platform, but my Quaker friend tried in vain to arouse the little girl. Seeing his dilemma, I took her in my arms and carried her through the snow to the carriage in waiting. The child was named Jasper, her trunk marked Jasper St. John. I don't know why I did so, but I wrote the name upon this card, and here it has been ever since. And this is the beginning and end of my acquaintance with my little fellow-passenger."

"The beginning, but not the end," said Jasper with fervor. "I must now thank you for an act of kindness which I did not fully appreciate at the time, for I and your fellow-passenger are the same; and well do I remember the pelting hail which seemed to take especial aim at my eyes as I struggled to free myself from the protection of my best friend."

"Indeed! And are you and my former little friend one and the same? Had I known this, I should have presented my card long ago" said Mr. Rainsford. "Miss Frothingham," he continued, feeling that Avis had been left a little too much out of the conversation, "congratulate me upon meeting with an old acquaintance."

"I do so with pleasure. I am not surprised that you made a note of Miss St. John's name. I have often been struck with it. Pray tell me, Jasper, darling, are you related to the St. John's of Warwick?"



"I do not know," said Jasper. "To tell the truth, I know very little of my pedigree."

"How honest in you to say so. There are few with such a name as yours, who would not make the best of it."

"The barren nobility of a name is nothing if divested of the virtue that made it," said Jasper, "and to be proud of a name I should have to do something to add to the glory of it."

"I agree with you," said Sidney Rainsford. "It has been said Virginians are a little too prone to nourish their pride upon the deeds of their ancestors. After many reverses and much suffering we are getting out of that, however; but, as a favorite author of mine has said, 'No one ever sounded the heights and depths of life, and drew from it the teachings and blessings it is capable of giving, without enduring suffering sharp and real as a part of it.'"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

JASPER had heard frequently from Abel since her residence in Mr. Beresford's family. The mail always came at breakfast-time, and she usually found her letters near her plate; and well did she know the bold, free handwriting upon the envelope that met her glance.

"That handwriting shows character," said Avis Frothingham, "and really it must have a history. Jasper, darling, I



fancy I see a peculiar look in your face when you read those letters, a look as if—but I must not say it.”

“Why?” asked Jasper, “you may say what you choose. The letters are from a cousin for whom I have only lately begun to have a cousinly affection.”

“Are they! But cousins are so dangerous.”

“Not to me,” said Jasper.

“Indeed! why?”

“Simply because they are cousins.”

“Explain, dear,” said Avis, shaking back her rings of hair and lifting up her lazy dark eyes.

“Simply because they *are* cousins,” said Jasper again.

“It seems perfectly natural to love one’s cousin as a brother. In all fiction where cousins are the lovers I cease to become interested.”

“You do! How strange! But you are a dear, honest, original girl, and I believe just what you tell me. Then that cousin of yours is not a lover?”

Jasper hesitated. “I did not say *that*,” she at length replied with some embarrassment and no slight annoyance.

“There now,” said Avis, “what have I done! I have unwittingly become the possessor of a secret. I am out of patience with myself. Jasper—may I call you Jasper?—Yes? Well, Jasper, dear, I would give any thing to resemble you; to have your character, your self-poise. You don’t know what an immense power it is. Do you know I think Sidney Rainsford likes you—yes, actually *likes* you—nothing else. He will never *love* mortal woman.

“Yes, he expects too much for that; but it is something



rare to have won even his regard. I have been nearer to a friendship with him than any person on earth, but we have never gotten beyond a certain point. Other men would have died for the smiles I have bestowed upon Sidney Rainsford; he only takes them as his due. Do you think you would have loved me if—if you had been a man?"

"I dare say I should," said Jasper, "since they say there is something fatally attractive about you."

"Not to all," replied Avis, shaking her head and sighing.

"Honestly, Jasper," said Avis, as she sat upon the floor in her snow-white wrapper, embracing her knees with her clasped hands, while her wealth of hair flowed to the many-colored carpet—"honestly, now, if you could imagine yourself to be Sidney Rainsford, do you think you could ever love *me*?"

"I think I could, if you wanted me to," said Jasper.

"Oh! you dear, honest, earnest creature," said Avis, getting nearer and putting her head in Jasper's lap.

"How very silly you must think me! Now kiss me and forgive a wicked, wicked thought I have had about you. You know Sidney and myself are only friends—nothing more—but the very thought that he knew you so long, so very long ago, long before he knew there was such a person in the world as Avis Frothingham, has concerned me. Haven't I been a childish, good-for-nothing creature?"

"I should say you had," said Jasper, playing with the long hair of Avis.

"There it is again! But I see I am forgiven; and now, dear, please don't call me *Miss* Frothingham: call me Avis,



won't you? When I come to Sherwood I want to be Avis to everybody."

"I want to be as free as a bird—besides, free to fly away mentally and physically if I choose. As to Sidney and myself, I think he used to look upon me pretty much as a large mastiff does upon a playful kitten with whom he has been domesticated—that is, with condescending toleration. He is different now. I really begin to believe that he thinks there is some good in me. Would you believe that he was one of the most distinguished heroes in the Southern army?"

Jasper had not heard it.

"I am not surprised, for there is nothing which exceeds his valor but his modesty. After the war he dropped his title, and his friends are so well acquainted with his tastes that they rarely address him except as Mr. Rainsford.

"And you never heard of his military career? Well, I will give you a glimpse of him as a soldier.

"His sympathies had been with the Union, but his native State came first in his affections, and when Virginia seceded, he joined his fate to hers and battled for her to the last.

"Not only did he do that, but he equipped a company at his own expense, and would accept no position in it higher than that of color-bearer. On one occasion the flag-staff was shot in two. He tore off the colors, tied them around his waist, and when the fight was over, he was found with the flag around him, red with blood and riddled with shot. He was desperately wounded then, but his recuperative powers are splendid, and he got well. But I tire you with the history of my hero."



"Not at all," said Jasper, still weaving plaits out of the hair that looked like spun gold, "not in the least. I wish you would tell me more."

"Do you? Well, there is magic in your touch, and as long as you are fingering with my hair I can refuse you nothing. Put that shawl around me, darling; I am such a good-for-nothing, delicate creature, you know. I've been coughing lately and must be careful."

"I must tell you more about Sidney Rainsford. Well, he was wounded repeatedly, and was nearly captured once besides. I heard it from an eye-witness. The way of it was this:

"There was skirmishing in front of Richmond. Sidney ventured nearer the enemies' lines than was prudent. Suddenly he was surrounded by a body of soldiers, from whom all hope of escape seemed utterly impossible.

"Throwing the reins over the neck of his magnificent charger, and putting spurs into his flanks, with a pistol extended in each hand, he plunged through the astonished crowd, who were almost ready to cheer him as they saw him flying in the distance. Wasn't *that* glorious?"

"It was just like him," said Jasper, catching some of the enthusiasm of Avis Frothingham.

"And now," said Avis, rising to her feet, "you see I have some reason to be proud of my hero friend. *Our* friend, I suppose I must say now," said Avis, with almost a touch of pathos in her voice.

"Kiss me good-night, dear. I have kept you up. I'm afraid we shall not feel like being ready for breakfast, but I



am certain you will be there if the hour is four o'clock," and Avis went to her room, leaving Jasper to the companionship of her own thoughts.

Yes, Abel had told Jasper of his love ; told her that under an indifferent, almost harsh manner he had disguised his true feelings. He realized in her absence how cheerless life would be without her, and declared that on her depended every hope of his being any thing but a doubting wanderer on the face of the earth.

This was the tone of each letter that came, and Jasper wrote frequently to her cousin, notwithstanding Avis pretended to think something might come of it, and privately drew the attention of others to the length and frequency of the letters directed to Abel Grantland.

A twelvemonth went by, and Jasper felt as if life were just beginning—so short, so bright, so joyous were the hours. She was happy in her sunny Southern home. As yet not one cloud had darkened the horizon.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Lightly falls the foot of time which only treads on flowers."

JASPER could scarcely realize that a whole year had passed since she had become a member of the Beresford household. She had become quite well acquainted with the pleasant



circle of friends which frequented Sherwood, but more especially so with Mr. Rainsford.

Notwithstanding Avis was absent for some months, scarcely a day passed that Sidney and his dog Sultan did not make their appearance at Mr. Beresford's house.

Avis was quite surprised on her return to hear how sociable Mr. Rainsford had been. Her suspicions might have been aroused but for the fact that she had too much confidence in the power of her own attractions to suppose for an instant that any one could compete with her in a game of hearts.

Avis was not at all displeased when Mr. Beresford insinuated that Sidney was her especial property, and she only flushed up a little when her old friend said it was time for her to stop her pranks and close the lists with the most gallant knight of them all.

"And notwithstanding your admiration for 'Sir Knight,' " responded Avis, "I have heard that you once did not agree at all in your views."

"Ah, my dear, that was before the war. I was for secession, Sidney for union; but I was an old man, Sidney a young one. I could excuse what I considered a want of experience, and he was magnanimous enough to treat me with the respect due to age. We tacitly agreed to disagree, and never mentioned the subject."

Avis threw down the embroidery with which she had been engaged, and seating herself upon a cushion at Mr. Beresford's feet, said, with her most arch and winning manner, "Please tell Jasper about Mr. Rainsford; he was censured once for his political opinions, was he not?"



"Oh! you sly puss!" said Mr. Beresford, patting Avis upon the hand which she rested upon his knee.

"Is it only Miss St. John who wishes to hear about Sidney?"

"Of course not," said Avis, conscious that she was blushing very deeply, and breaking into a smile that always seemed to intensify her dimples. "Of course not; I never tire of hearing about a brave man, but Miss St. John seemed so much interested on one occasion when I was relating one or two incidents in Mr. Rainsford's soldier life that I thought she would like to hear more about him. Your opinions were not the same. I should not have touched upon that point I suppose."

"No harm done, my dear. Time mellows all things, and there are some who now say that Sidney Rainsford's words seem almost like prophecy."

"But they created excitement at the time, did they not?"

"Yes, very great. But come, let us go out upon the verandah. This room is close. We will chat in the open air if you ladies will put up with my pipe," said Mr. Beresford, making a motion to leave the room.

"Agreed!" and to the long gallery they all repaired, and Dandy having filled his master's pipe, Mr. Beresford puffed away some time before resuming the subject under discussion.

"Yes," said he at length, "the young man was heir to an ancient name. He was called upon to define his position, and astonished us all by coming out strongly for *the Union*. He, one of the largest slave-owners in the South,



asked if *Slavery was worth the Union*. He for one was willing to sacrifice his slave property to preserve a united government." He wound up his speech with a perfect burst of eloquence, and said that although he would battle for the Union so long as he was in it, if *Virginia seceded*, and called for volunteers to defend her from invasion, he did not expect to be found far behind those who were crying out so loudly for blood, *unless it was in retreat*.

"He was true to his word. All know his record during the war—but here he comes, and we must drop the subject for the present, for there is nothing he dislikes so much as any allusion to those dark and stormy days."

By this time Sidney had dismounted, and Sultan, leaping and frolicking, first in front of his master, and then at his side, escorted him into the portico.

All were delighted to see the visitor, and Avis invited him to a seat near herself, and playfully reproached him for not having come over the day before.

"I was detained at home by some friends, who, in the hope of inducing me to join them in their annual deer-hunt, took Maplewood in their route. I am losing my taste for such things now, but I came over to see if Mr. Beresford would join the party."

"Ah, no, my dear fellow, it is rather early in the season; besides, it is as much as *I* can do to keep the foxes down."

"Speaking of foxes," said Sidney, "your favorite hound, Phantom, is at Maplewood."

"Phantom! Bless my soul, I am glad to hear it. I thought I had lost him. My wife has named him Phantom



on account of his attenuated appearance ; nevertheless, he is the finest of the whole pack."

"You forget, my dear," said Mrs. Beresford, "that he won his name partly on account of his expert way of spiriting off whatever eatables struck his fancy. Mr. Rainsford, your housekeeper had better look to her larder. Nothing is safe as long as Phantom is about."

"Now, my dear," responded Mr. Beresford, knocking the ashes from his pipe, "that is a downright slander. I would almost as soon one would speak ill of my children as of one of my hounds. Racer, Rover, Rouser, Jack, and Phantom—in fact, the whole pack are dogs of unexceptionable character. Indeed, I don't know fifteen better-behaved dogs anywhere."

The chase was Mr. Beresford's passion ; so his wife said nothing, although she was "of the same opinion still," and well she might be. Frequently did the servants report a ham, a shoulder of mutton, or a dish of turkey-salad as having been abstracted by Phantom and his followers, who lay in ambush. On one occasion when a fruit-cake disappeared Mrs. Beresford's patience was sorely tried, and she declared that her husband's place had been misnamed, and should have been called Dogwood instead of Sherwood.

This was the nearest that amiable lady ever came to finding fault with her husband's proclivities, except on the occasion of the Bishop's annual visit.

It so happened that services could only be held at night, and Mr. Beresford, a loyal churchman, and a vestryman, marshalled his family, guests, retainers and all, and himself



riding on his famous "Old Gray" at the head of the procession, the Sherwood people set out for Chatsworth Church.

Suddenly there was the sound of the huntsman's horn in the distance ; then was heard the "music of the hounds." Evidently some of Mr. Beresford's neighbors were in pursuit of the fox. Human nature is weak. The church-goers were half way to Chatsworth ; but now the chase grew more exciting—the dogs were on the track—and the temptation was more than Mr. Beresford could resist. So putting spurs to his horse, the last that his wife saw of him was when he was flying, Gilpen-like, across the fields regardless of wife, children, and friends.

It is needless to say that Mr. Beresford's seat at Chatsworth Church was vacant that night ; and when that gentleman was bantered on account of his conduct, he took refuge in the argument that Sampson had carried on the sport on a much larger scale, but not under such trying circumstances.

But to return to Phantom.

"Yes, he is a noble dog ; he is the swiftest of the pack," said Mr. Beresford. "In one of my hunts a short time ago we started a wildcat. It was beautiful to witness the dog's sagacity and the wonderful manner in which he managed the attack. Phantom guilty of a lawless act—Phantom steal ! Mrs. Beresford, I am surprised at you."

Just then was heard the familiar yelp of a hound.

"Ah," said Mr. Beresford, starting up suddenly, "that is Phantom's voice. Rainsford, he must have followed



you," and Mr. Beresford cried out, "here, Phantom; here, Phantom; here, my good fellow!"

Phantom obeyed his master's call, but came up under difficulties. He had evidently been on an excursion to Mr. Rainsford's dairy, and had done battle in a cream-jar, and although the dog came off conqueror, the crockery had been the worse for it, and Phantom now wore around his neck the badge of his dishonesty in the shape of a stone rim, which was neither convenient nor becoming.

Even Mr. Rainsford laughed heartily at the turn matters had taken, and Mr. Beresford retired in the direction of the stables for the purpose of extricating from his difficulties the "*pride of the pack*."

"Well, so much for dogs," said Avis as Mr. B. disappeared. "Now let's talk of something else."

"With pleasure," responded Mr. Rainsford. "Of what?"

"Maplewood. I am positively dying to see Maplewood. The place has a State reputation. Mr. Rainsford, why don't you invite us to drive there?"

"*Would* you go?" asked Sidney, with some animation, a bright thought striking him all at once.

"Of course, if Mrs. Beresford will be our chaperon. Will you, darling?" asked Avis in her irresistibly coaxing manner.

"Of course, dear, if you wish it; but when?"

"At your earliest convenience," put in Sidney. "I had not thought you would condescend to visit my bachelor abode, but I shall feel truly gratified if you will do so. Suppose you drive over to-morrow."



Mrs. Beresford shook her head.

"To-morrow! Alas! we are the slaves of our crops. We keep few pleasure horses since the war, and my carriage-pair have been pressed into service to haul off tobacco to Chatsworth."

"It is a matter of no consequence," responded Sidney. "My trotters Corisande and Fantine are standing idle in the stable. I will drive over in a light landau for you myself."

"Oh! charming," exclaimed Avis, clapping her pretty hands. "We go, of course."

"Miss St. John," said Sidney, going to the farther end of the portico where Jasper was seated with the children, "Will you do me an especial favor?"

"If I can," said Jasper, looking up from the book of pictures she had been explaining to the boys.

"To-morrow is Saturday, is it not?" asked Sidney?

"It is."

"I am going to drive over for Mrs. Beresford and Miss Frothingham; won't you join the party?"

Jasper hesitated.

"Yes, she will," put in Rob, "'cause *I'm* going."

"And I," said Pink. "And I," echoed Tip. "And *me too*," cried Tiny.

"Yes, everybody is going," said Mr. Rainsford, encouraging the idea. "I have a vehicle which will accommodate all of the juveniles. I will take charge of the ladies in a separate conveyance. You will go, will you not, Miss St. John?"



"Of course," urged Mrs. Beresford. "We will not consent for her to remain at home."

"But have I *your* promise," asked Sidney, still addressing himself to Jasper. "We shall have an excellent opportunity of discussing the merits of that painting I was describing to you a few days ago."

Jasper could no longer decline, and her voice was almost drowned by the children crying out, "Yes, yes, she *is* going, Mr. Rainsford."

Mrs. Beresford rather demurred when she heard of Sidney's plan about the children. She was afraid they would give trouble, but Mr. Rainsford assured her they would contribute to his enjoyment, and the plan was agreed upon.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

MR. BERESFORD was glad to hear that Maplewood was to be open once more. It was time it had an airing, if only for an evening. He would join the party himself. Some of the happiest days of his boyhood had been spent at the old place.

True to the appointed hour, Sidney drove up the following afternoon, and the beautiful trotters pawed and champed their bits in front of the Sherwood mansion.

Mammy undertook to be the bearer of the tidings that



the carriage was at the door, but Avis, as usual, was not ready, and had yet to give the finishing touch to her curls.

“Lor’ sakes alive, Miss Avis, they are a waitin’ for you. *Kerosene and Camphine* are mighty impatient. They are a rarin’ and chargin’, but it don’t make any difference to Mr. Rainsford; they can’t cut up any capers with *him*; he can just hold ’em like they were a passle of mice.”

“Mammy, you’ll be the death of me yet,” said Avis, looking for her gloves. “Now I’m ready.”

“Coming, coming,” called out Avis to Mr. Beresford, who had stationed himself at the foot of the stairs, and who usually took that position, watch in hand, when the ladies were going anywhere, and continued to hurry them up until they made their appearance. Indeed, so habitual had this conduct become on Mr. Beresford’s part that it had lost its effect, and his admonitions were unheeded.

At last all were fairly on their way to Maplewood, and Avis, seated by Mr. Rainsford, chatted merrily on the respective merits of Corisande and Fantine, while Mrs. Beresford and Jasper enjoyed in silence the bracing air and beautiful scenery.

After a rapid drive of about two or three miles, just after making a turn at the foot of a hill, Sidney checked his horses, and Maplewood burst upon the delighted vision.

“Isn’t it a noble mansion?” said Mr. Beresford, who had just galloped up. “The race of men that built such houses has passed away.” And now turning in his saddle, Mr. Beresford pointed with his riding whip to the broad expanse before them, and to the far-off mountains which



seemed to enclose the valley like an amphitheatre with a wavy line of the Blue Ridge and Alleghanies.

"Could nature be more lavish!" exclaimed Mr. Beresford.

"As far as the eye can reach! all is your *own*, too, Sidney."

"Alas! yes," responded Mr. Rainsford.

"Why *alas*?" inquired Avis.

"Because to *me* there is a loneliness about the scene. Once these broad fields were teeming with life. The fortunes of war have made it different. Shall we drive on?"

"Not quite yet; this view is so lovely! How like an old castle Maplewood looks! Are there many rooms in it?" asked Avis.

"Twenty," replied Sidney,

"Ah, those grand old halls have often been filled," said Mrs. Beresford with a sigh, remembering the princely hospitality of former days,

"Yes," responded Sidney.

"But now their echoes and their empty tread  
Will sound like voices from the dead."

A shadow crossed the speaker's brow. He whipped up his horses and drove on some moments without saying anything.

At last the avenue of oaks was entered, and Corisande and Fantine increased their speed as they neared the end of their journey, and ere long drew up in front of the long colonnade at Maplewood.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Sidney, throwing the reins to a man in waiting, and leaping from his seat.



"Now," said he, after assisting the ladies from the carriage, "I must acknowledge to having decoyed you into the midst of the party of huntsmen. They will be detained here to-night on account of the non-arrival of a comrade whom they expected."

"I am sure *we* can stand it if they can," responded Avis, always equal to the occasion, and now quite in her element.

Just then young Mr. Mandeville appeared, and was delighted to stand on one side of Avis, although Sidney held her hand as she sprang from the landau.

They were ushered into the hall by the white-haired negro porter, who bowed low as he held the door open for the visitors to pass through.

Avis stopped to admire the lofty arch which divided the front of the house from the rear, which seemed to disappear in a succession of arches lost in a vista suggestive of an interminable length of building.

Three or four trained servants stood about in different places, ready to answer the call of the ladies. The inevitable Mammy of Maplewood was present also, and, under the name of Aunt Zinka, now stepped forward, with all the grace of manner of her former mistress, to ask if the ladies would go up stairs and take off their hats.

Mrs. Beresford, after a word of friendly recognition to Aunt Zinka, who had been promoted to the position of Mr. Rainsford's housekeeper, thought it *would* be best if they smoothed their hair and rested a few moments before walking about the grounds. So, under Aunt Zinka's guidance, they repaired to the suite of chambers above.



"Ah, how like old times it seems!" exclaimed Mrs. Beresford, throwing herself into the first arm-chair to which she came, and quite overcome with a tide of recollections. "This was Mrs. Rainsford's room."

"Yes, m'am" responded Aunt Zinka; "and Mass Sidney was born in it."

There was an atmosphere of elegance and repose about everything in that chamber. Some faded flowers were in a vase upon the toilet.

"She put them there," said Aunt Zinka, seeing that Mrs. Beresford had observed them. "The room is just as she left it. Mass Sidney won't allow a thing to be touched."

"Oh, how sad!" exclaimed Mrs. Beresford, burying her face in her handkerchief for a moment. "What a change has taken place since I was last here!"

"Yes, old master, mistress, and young Mass Edward all dead since then," responded Aunt Zinka.

"No wonder Mr. Rainsford has lost his interest in his home. How desolate it must be here now! I am glad a sufficient number of the old servants have remained with Mr. Rainsford to keep the homestead from looking entirely deserted."

"What, leave Mass Sidney!" exclaimed Aunt Zinka. "I nursed him when he was a baby. We all think the sun rises and sets in Mass Sidney. Leave him, indeed! Not while he's on top of *this* earth."

A soldier's hat and coat were hanging upon the wall, and as Mrs. Beresford's tearful glance rested there, Aunt Zinka said: "They are Mass Edward's. He was the youngest



son—the *baby*. You know he was killed at the battle of Seven Pines.”

“ Didn’t Mrs. Rainsford object to giving him up when he went into the army ? ”

“ Never said a word,” responded Aunt Zinka, shaking her head. “ ’Peared like she couldn’t do enough for the soldiers. She set all the servants on the plantation to work for ’em ; she wouldn’t have let a piece of mutton come on her table hardly if she’d been starving. Wool was too precious ; they wanted all they could get to weave cloth for the ‘ company,’ and mistress even cut up her wedding-dress to make a flag for her son when he went to battle, and told him to bring it back if it *was* shot into holes.”

“ Yes, I remember,” said Mrs. Beresford.

“ Ah, my dear lady, *I* remember what I would like to forget—how, shortly after old master died, the telegraph brought the news that young Mass Edward was shot.

“ My mistress never shed a tear—she laid upon yon bed with her eyes fixed upon the wall for days. The doctor said she would die if something wasn’t done. At last they thought of Mass Edward’s coat and hat (the suit he wore in battle), an’ they brought ’em. See, this is the very place where the bullet went through,” said Aunt Zinka, lifting up the sleeve of the garment. “ Yes, they held this up before her, and then the tears came, and she was saved—but not for long. She never got over *his* death, and after the surrender her heart *just broke*; and, to make a long story short, she is over there in the grave-yard,” and Aunt Zinka pointed in the direction of the hills.



Just then, as usual, Mr. Beresford commenced rallying his forces from the foot of the stairs, and Mrs. Beresford wiped her eyes and proposed to Jasper and Avis that they should go down and see if the children had come.

They *had* arrived, and there was no lack of mirth and noise until Aunt Keziah succeeded in convincing them that the croquet-ground was far more attractive than the halls of Maplewood.

Avis recognized among the gentlemen visitors some of her old admirers. She was soon the queen of a small circle, and possessing the two qualities which some think more necessary for belleship than any others, viz.: a fondness for gentlemen's society and an inexhaustible fund of small talk, her star rose to the zenith of its glory.

Sidney took Jasper under his especial protection, and was not forgetful of the picture he had promised to show her.

"These are my friends," said he, as he opened the door of a capacious apartment which seemed to have been devoted to works of art. "This is the 'Sunset' of which I was speaking to you. It is the only copy in America," and Sidney proposed that they should be seated while they examined into the merits of the painting.

"Observe that lonely traveller," he continued. "I can almost feel the darkness approaching as I look at him, notwithstanding

'The weary sun hath made a golden set.'"

" 'And by the bright track of his fiery car  
Given token of a goodly day to-morrow,' "

added Jasper, finishing the quotation.



Sidney gave her an appreciative look. "Miss St. John," said he, "I fear you will think me a sentimentalist when I tell you that this room is my favorite retreat."

"Not at all," responded Jasper, looking around at the family portraits, and particularly struck with a grand looking gentleman in front of her.

"Ah, that is my father," said Sidney in response to the inquiring look he read in Jasper's eyes. "My mother is next him."

"How strikingly beautiful she must have been!" exclaimed Jasper involuntarily.

"The picture is not at all flattered. At the time it was taken it was hardly thought to do the original justice. On the other side of my mother, is the portrait of my younger brother, Edward."

"One of the heroes of Seven Pines," said Jasper.

"Yes; he was but a boy—seventeen, and his mother's darling. It was like grinding up the seed corn to let *him* go into the army, but the South had need of every man that could fire a gun, and my mother bade him God-speed. That picture was taken shortly before he left home."

"What a gentle, lovely expression! He must have been scarcely more than a child," said Jasper.

"Scarcely," responded Sidney. "The night before the battle he slept in my tent. I woke and found his arm around me, and his head upon my breast." Sidney paused. After a while he added, in a subdued voice, "A bullet entered his heart the next day."



Jasper's eyelids drooped, for a tear was on her lashes and she wished to hide it.

"I should not revert to the past," said Sidney, recovering himself. "I cannot account for it, but *you*, of all other persons I ever saw, possess the power of drawing out my confidence. I sit and muse as I look at these pictures, for I have no one to speak to. It is quite refreshing to talk to some one who understands me. I loved the old flag,—was proud of seeing it flying in foreign ports. I never gave it up until the soldiers marched South to coerce a sister State. Then I tore the colors from my heart and knew no nationality but *The South*. It is all over now—the 'conquered banner' is furled forever—the *battle has been fought*."

Jasper's eyes were still swimming in unshed tears. "Yes," said she, "the battle of the South is indeed over, but the battle of life is yet to fight, and a brave man will not lay down his arms as long as there is a hope of victory."

"True, but I need new arms—hope, courage of a different kind, and——"

"Faith," added Jasper.

"Yes, faith," and Sidney was silent for a moment, while the laughter of the gay throng without sounded strangely as it penetrated the gloomy apartment where Mr. Rainsford and Jasper sat. All at once Sidney roused himself and said, "It is quite selfish in me to monopolize you in this way. Can you forgive me? I was unconscious of the flight of time."



“And I,” said Jasper, “I do not enjoy a crowd ; but even if I did I could not have had half as much pleasure in anything as in ——”

Jasper had gone farther than she intended. She stopped short, and blushed painfully. Sidney read the import of the unfinished sentence in her eyes, and raised her hand to his lips. “You must put up with me, Jasper,” said he ; “I can talk to you as I can to no other woman. Are we not very near to each other ?”

Just then Rob came down the hall full tilt upon a stick horse, and now, as he stood in the open door, he informed Jasper that Tip and himself had been playing a game of Tournament, and that *he* had won, and that Jasper was to be crowned queen.

As Jasper joined the guests, a delicate color mantled her cheek, and before she could be introduced to all, several persons wondered who the graceful and elegant woman could be.

Sidney threw open windows of darkened rooms to let stronger light upon the carved woodwork, the massive doors and arches, and ancient architecture, and after Avis had gratified her curiosity to the utmost, the lord of the manor proposed that they should repair to the lawn.

“I second the motion,” said Mr. Beresford as he noticed the servants moving around with trays on which were all the indications of an early tea.

Scattered about in groups in the open air, all were soon accommodated with seats, and the servants, after having



placed small tables before each person, proceeded to offer refreshments.

"Ah, this is the old style," said Mr. Beresford, sipping his tea with intense enjoyment.

"My wife and I have given up handed suppers," he added. "It seems a long time ago since we could sit down anywhere under a tree out of doors and have our tea brought to us. Between the educational interests and the anxious bench it is as much as *we* can do to get our meals set on the *table*, but Cuffee is a lazy, good-for-nothing, affectionate creature, and I like him in spite of his faults."

The tea having been disposed of, then was proffered a silver bowl of ice-cream, and afterwards waiters of superb fruit of every description, the latter all grown at Maplewood.

But the sun was moving farther down the west, and Mrs. Beresford reminded her husband that it was time the children were at home.

The gentlemen urged delay, but Mr. Beresford remembered there was no moon, and Mr. Rainsford's trotters were pretty lively; he therefore requested that Sidney would order old gray.

The carriage was once more at the door, and Sidney asked his gentlemen friends to excuse him until he should return from Sherwood, whither he intended accompanying the ladies; and having invited Jasper to a seat beside him, he took the reins, and Fantine and Corisande obeyed their master's command.

Mr. Mandeville galloped by the side of Avis, who, though



not on horseback, managed to keep up an animated conversation with him during a greater part of the drive.

She declared that to have seen Maplewood was something to remember as long as she lived—it would be like a green spot in her memory.

After that long-remembered evening, many a time when Sidney sat in his quiet library, and tried to beguile the time with book or paper, the face of a lovable woman came between his eyes and the page on which they rested.

The face was not beautiful, but its ever-varying expression spoke to his soul. To see it once was to feel that it had a history—its owner had a heart.

As for Jasper, the sound of Sidney's name sent a thrill through her being. His horse, his dog—in fact, everything in which he held an ownership possessed an interest and a charm peculiarly its own.

She flattered herself that this was only sympathy for a lonely man who had honored her with his confidence. She freely let out her heart to him ; he was too noble to suspect her of anything but the warm friendship he had himself exacted from her, so Jasper lulled to sleep some few womanly fears that presented themselves, and thought herself safe.



## CHAPTER XX.

THE days were slipping by into the beautiful Indian summer peculiar to our climate.

The mountains were scarcely visible through a golden haze. Scarlet and yellow leaves were dropping in the forest, and rich and ripe purple grapes festooned the frames of the garden walks.

This delicious season, while it lulls the senses and seems to diffuse a repose throughout the soul, is equally as suggestive of sadness as of joy, for as we walk in the woods, and the crisp yellow leaves that have fallen crumble beneath our feet, we are reminded that we too must fade as the leaf, and we cannot wholly enjoy the splendor of the season, for well do we know it is the last farewell of summer.

The Sherwood children were getting so good that it touched Mr. Beresford to the heart. Rob had not run off for a month at least. Tip and Tiny had done nothing positively out of the way for a long time, unless it was when they played a game of *hanging*, on which occasion they took advantage of Mammy's being absent at her dinner to tie a pocket handkerchief around the baby's neck and suspend her from the knob of the nursery door.

Fortunately Polly took it upon herself to inform Aunt Kizzy, who rushed to the rescue just as her precious Bessie was becoming blue in the face.



Tip and Tiny were dreadfully distressed to hear that serious consequences might have befallen the victim of their innocent amusement, and cried as if their little hearts would break.

Yes, the children *were* getting better ; everybody said so, and Mr. Beresford declared jokingly that he felt uneasy about them—feared they might not live. They needed recreation, and must have a holiday. The cold weather would soon come on, which would put an end to all outdoor amusements. Mr. Beresford “believed in fresh air ;” the children were too much confined. “Let them have a holiday once in a while, Miss St. John, if you please,” said he.

Jasper had no objection, for she was a strong advocate for rewards as well as punishments.

There was a favorite resort near the confines of the Sherwood estate. It was not too remote for a walk, and yet secluded and romantic enough to satisfy the tastes of the most fastidious.

A miniature piece of table-land, still green with velvety sod, sloped gently on one side to fields wherein were grazing herds of cattle ; on the other it stretched far away to a wild and trackless forest. In front the landscape melted away in fields that were growing yellow with golden grain, behind which rose a chain of dark-blue mountains, while in the rear this plateau descended abruptly as if in some convulsion the bosom of the earth had been torn asunder. Nature seemed to have tried herself at that sequestered spot, for at the bottom of the chasm there roared and foamed in pictur-



esque cascades one of those streams which flows to the lowlands from some far-off mountain peak.

"Will Miss St. John go with the children on an excursion?" asked Mrs. Beresford? She thought it would be ever so pleasant.

Jasper consented, and then Avis wanted to join the party. Mr. Rainsford also asked if he might be one of the number, and finally it was decided that everybody should go; from Mrs. Beresford to the baby. It was a pity Mr. B. was compelled to be in Chatsworth, for the more the merrier. But there was young Mr. Mandeville, another one of the worshippers at the shrine of Avis. He would be at Sherwood, anyhow, and would be only too glad to join the excursionists. So the whole thing was arranged, and the children clapped their hands for glee, and Rob stood on his head in spite of his curls.

There was no preparation for such an impromptu affair, and all started off to walk except Avis, who Mrs. Beresford insisted was not equal to the exertion, so Avis mounted upon Zephyr with Sidney Rainsford as her cavalier; they reached the spot a while before the rest of the party. All came up in time, however, and now, seated under the shade of the oaks which bordered one side of this miniature plateau, they rested while they drank in the exquisite scenery which is the striking feature in that portion of country which has been called "The Switzerland of America."

The children rambled away in search of pebbles and butterflies, the grown folks amused themselves as best they



could, but all found time rather harder to kill than they had anticipated.

Finally Avis thought she would like to have a view of the village from a certain point, and Mr. Mandeville accompanied her. Mr. Rainsford, half reclining under a tree while enjoying a cigar, was soon deep in an article in the day's paper on the prospect of war in Europe, and Mrs. Beresford beguiled the time with the baby's stocking which she had commenced knitting long before it was born.

Presently here came the children, tired and panting, and wanting bread and butter, and a story.

"A story, Miss St. John ; please tell us a story," they all cried.

"Yes, tell us about the beautiful Princess whose words turned to pearls every time she spoke," said Pink.

"Oh, no, please don't," said Rob. "I'm so sick of girls ; tell us something about boys."

Jasper informed Master Rob "that girls had to be served first, afterwards, if he would be quiet, he also should have a story to suit his taste." So, at some distance from the rest, the children formed a circle around her and she commenced, "Once upon a time, etc."

Mammy formed a cradle of some soft moss at the foot of a tree ; in this she made a nest for the baby out of its mother's red shawl.

But Mammy *must* have some water ; she was dying of thirst. Polly and herself would go to the spring together ; baby wouldn't wake up until she came back, she was sure.

The tree under which little Bessie slept was rather near



the edge of the plateau, but not near enough to be dangerous. "Besides, baby couldn't crawl, and even if she could, had too much sense to crawl backward in the direction of the precipice." So argued Mammy as she went in search of water.

"Once upon a time," commenced Jasper again.

"I wish that cow would stop her noise," said Rob. "I can't hear a word. If she don't mind I'll throw a stone at her, and then she'll shut up. She bellows and bellows, and all for nothing. She can't get her calf back, that's certain."

It was just as Rob said. In a field adjoining the plateau ranged a beautiful young heifer which had lately been separated from her calf. Up and down she roved, seeking for egress from her place of confinement. Each moment she became more and more noisy, and now seemed to consider the party on the adjoining plateau responsible for the abduction of her offspring.

Suddenly she spied the red shawl, and with one bound was over the fence and making for the baby.

Mrs. Beresford, who was some distance off, was transfixed to the spot with speechless horror; she could do nothing. And now the infuriated animal had her horns under the luckless baby, and was lifting it from the ground. One moment more and it would be tossed into the air, to fall to the earth again with broken bones, or else be gored to death.

"Once upon a time," said Jasper—suddenly she stopped, and breaking from her little group of listeners she sprang right over the head of Tiny, sped like the wind to the opposite side of the plateau, wrenched the child from its peril-



ous position, and darted behind a tree to be out of the sight and track of the infuriated enemy.

Alas ! Jasper had miscalculated the distance which she dared venture in her retreat. The earth which projected in the rear of the tree was a mere crust, and down, down she went with the baby in her arms, rocks and earth crumbling under her feet and dropping far, far away into the depths of the roaring water beneath.

Mrs. Beresford came sufficiently to herself to cry out for help, and Sidney Rainsford, as he looked up from his paper, saw for the first time what was going on.

He was on the spot in a moment. And now poised, as it were, in air, Jasper clung to the stump of an old cedar tree with one hand while she held to the baby with the other.

"Do not be alarmed," said Sidney Rainsford, though his own voice trembled so that one might have suggested that he had best apply the warning to himself.

His eye took in the situation at a glance. He could, by stooping, almost put his hand on Jasper's head. If she could only lay the baby down for a few moments, Rainsford, on his knees, could, by extending both hands, pull Jasper up to where he stood upon the table-land. He explained his plan to her.

"I cannot leave Bessie here for a moment ; she would not be safe," said Jasper.

"How unfortunate !" exclaimed Rainsford.

All at once his eye caught sight of a bridle-path which sloped from the edge of the plateau down in the direction of the stream at the bottom of the abyss. It was evidently



the path made by some excursionist, for no human being could have had any object but that of adventure in traveling in such a direction.

“Do you think you can hold on, Miss St. John?”

“Not very long,” responded Jasper. And now Sidney, utterly oblivious of the fact that Mrs. Beresford was all this time wringing her hands, and Mammy was calling loudly to her Bessie, made for the narrow path, which commenced some fifty yards from where he stood.

He found it better and firmer than it looked to be, and called out encouragingly to Jasper as he advanced. And now, as he approached nearer, he noticed that the baby's white dress was saturated with blood.

Coming up at last, he took the child from the only arm which Jasper could furnish it as a support.

“Is she hurt?” he asked with evident concern.

“Not at all, the blood is from my arm;” and Sidney Rainsford for the first time caught sight of the torn sleeve and the deep gash in the arm which had come in contact with the sharp-pointed rocks.

“Mammy,” called out Sidney, “are you there?”

“Yes, here I is, master,” said Mammy, wiping her eyes with the corner of her white apron.

“Well, take your baby;” and, poising himself on tiptoe, he said, “Look out!” and tossed the child over the edge of the table-land.

Mammy was on her knees ready to receive her precious one, who evidently regarded the whole affair as a good joke, and rolled, laughing and crowing, right to its Mammy's bosom.



"It's a pity grown people cannot be treated in the same way," said Rainsford, making a desperate attempt at a joke.

"Give me your hand!"

"There is no use, I cannot move."

"What is the matter?"

"I have sprained my ankle," said Jasper, whose lips were now white with the agony of the pain she suffered.

"My own suffering Jasper," said Sidney Rainsford, forgetting himself entirely, "there is but one way—you have tried it before—may I take you in my arms?"

"Yes! I cannot help myself!" and Jasper reeled and was growing blind with agony.

Sidney stooped and himself put back the dishevelled locks out of her eyes. "Put your arm about my neck."

"I must not—it is bleeding."

"Nonsense! You *must*!"

"Now for it!" Sidney stooped still lower, and Jasper did as he told her. He paused one moment ere he lifted her in his strong arms, and said, "Do you trust me, Jasper?"

"Implicitly!"

"My dear, honest girl! if we sink in yonder abyss; we sink together." He looked her full in the eyes.

"I know it," said Jasper.

"If you were to slip from these arms into yon roaring torrent, do you think that I would care to live without you?"

Jasper's heart palpitated so violently that she could find no words to give expression to her thoughts, and Sidney, noticing her white lips, gathered her nearer to his heart and retraced his steps by the path he had come.



It was a difficult ascent, and several times he paused to gather new strength and breath. At last he reached the plateau and once more stood upon *terra firma*.

"I will place you under the shade of this tree," said he, putting Jasper down gently and seizing the first thing that came in his way for a pillow.

"And now," said he, tearing into strips a fine white linen cambric handkerchief, "I will dress that arm if you will allow me."

"Hadn't I better do it, Mass Sidney?" said Mammy. "It 'pears to me your hand is *mighty trimbly*."

"True, I do tremble a little," said Sidney, "but, nervous as I appear to be, I had much of this sort of thing to do in the army, and I do not think my hand has forgotten its cunning yet. Probably my want of composure is owing to the fact that this is my first female patient. Men are tough, and I do not mind them; but it is a different thing when one plays the surgeon to the tender flesh of a woman."

"Is that too tight," said he, tying the bandage.

"All right; thank you," said Jasper, "but I must sit up," and she begged that the pillow might be used as a prop instead of being put under her head.

By this time Avis came up, and seeing the blood upon baby's dress, shrieked as she rushed forward.

"Oh! my darling pet! what has happened? Mammy,—Mr. Rainsford—what has happened to our precious Bessie?"

"The child is unhurt," said Sidney Rainsford sternly.

"You had best turn your attention to Miss St. John."

One quick, reproachful, tear-dimmed glance shot from the



dark eyes of Avis, and then she turned to Jasper. Avis tore off her gloves as she knelt at Jasper's side and bathed her head in perfume, which Avis never failed to have at hand.

"That will do," said Jasper; "I feel quite ashamed of myself to have created such a stir."

The effort of those few words caused a deadly pallor to overspread her face.

Sidney Rainsford noticed it, and, dropping on one knee, fanned her vigorously. The faintness passed, and Jasper opened her eyes again.

"This approaches the dramatic," she said with a slight attempt at playfulness. "Indeed, Mr. Rainsford, I take up too much of your time."

"Not at all! I shall remain here as long as I can be of use."

"Give me the fan, won't you?" said Jasper.

"You are too weak to wield it."

"Indeed I am not."

"Jasper, darling, I believe that is only a ruse to get rid of Mr. Rainsford," said Avis.

"Do you desire that I should leave you?" said Sidney, springing to his feet. Jasper did not perceive that Avis answered for her with a nod, and before Jasper herself could reply Sidney Rainsford had surrendered the fan, and with folded arms walked back to the spot where he had thrown down his newspaper.



## CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Mr. Rainsford returned to his newspaper his *eyes* were fastened upon it, but not his thoughts. There is no telling how long he might have remained thus had not Mrs. Beresford approached him begging for a few words of advice.

“How shall we get Miss St. John home?” was the question which disturbed the usual placidity of her thoughts, which question finally took form in words as the lady presented herself before the gentleman who reclined under the shade of a tree.

“At your service ;” said Sidney, springing up, “we shall see.”

“Do you think you could trust yourself with Prince, Miss St. John,” said he, approaching Jasper with some slight embarrassment in his manner.

“Or Zephyr?” put in Avis.

“You must ride Zephyr *yourself*,” said Rainsford with decision.

“But Zephyr is gentler, and Jasper is not accustomed to riding.”

“Never mind about that. Are you afraid to ride Prince, Miss St. John?”

“Not at all.”

“But there is a man’s saddle upon Prince, Mr. Rainsford. Do be merciful,” said Avis.



“ True ; I had not thought of that ; I had forgotten.”

In fact Sidney Rainsford did not seem to know what he was talking of.

“ Never mind about the saddle ; I can manage very well. I have often ridden without one when I was a child,” said Jasper.

“ Have you ? Well, I was going to say if you are not afraid of my good Prince, I will lift you to his back and lead him myself to Sherwood.”

Jasper accepted with thanks. She was beginning to feel that she would trust herself upon anything if she could only get back to her own room.

And now Prince, who was already accoutred, grazing in the distance, pricked up his ears at the sound of his master's whistle and dashed towards him.

“ I must take a little of the mettle out of you, my old fellow,” said Sidney, springing into the saddle and galloping to the spot where hung the martingale on the limb of a tree.

Mr. Rainsford was soon back again, and dismounted in front of Jasper. “ He puts on a few airs with strangers at first,” said Sidney, stroking Prince gently, “ but one word from his master brings him to himself. So gently, my good fellow ! Be quiet, Prince ! See, he understands me !”

“ We had as well go,” said Mrs. Beresford, putting up her knitting. “ Miss St. John, if you think you can not stand the jolting, I could send the carriage. Some one could wait here with you.”

“ She had best go now,” said Sidney. “ That ankle needs attention. It is the left one which is sprained. I can ar-



range in such a way that the foot can rest securely in the stirrup, and as for jolting, Prince shall move so circumspectly that he shall not jolt a fly."

Settling the matter in this way, Jasper was lifted to the saddle, and Sidney, walking in front, with his arm run through the reins, took up the line of march for Sherwood.

"How like a dream it all seems!" said Avis a few days after the occurrence related. "It hardly seems like it could be true! Do you know, Jasper, dear, the first time I ever heard of you was through Professor Reinberg? I took private lessons of him during my winter in Philadelphia. Well, darling, the first thing he told me was about your saving some child or other from drowning; was that so?"

"Yes, it was his daughter—little Bertha Reinberg."

"Indeed! it is truly remarkable that one person should have had two such experiences in the course of a lifetime. If we were to read of it in a novel we would not believe it, would we?"

"Of course not, because we are so accustomed to being served with what is only fiction."

"Well, when you are well enough to come downstairs again you shall tell us all about it."

"I am well now," responded Jasper, "only this foot will not take me where I wish to go. I hope no one thinks I keep my room because I am ill."

"Oh! no, indeed. We all understand how it is. But one person thinks you are very obstinate."

"Who?"

"Sidney Rainsford."



"In what way?"

"In persisting that the children shall go on with their lessons."

"I am sorry if Mr. Rainsford thinks I would do anything simply to carry a point. I am able to attend to my duties, and can do so quite as well when upon this lounge as if I were sitting in the school-room. I should not enjoy life at all if I were condemned to be idle all day."

"Jasper, what would I do if I were in your place? I don't think I could make my living in any way whatever. I haven't the stamina. If I were deprived of my fortune I should be a helpless cumberer of the earth."

"No one knows what one can do until tried," said Jasper.

"I look at you with astonishment," continued Avis.

"What a hum-drum business teaching must be!"

"Not if one is interested."

"*That* I never could succeed in becoming. I don't think that I am irascible, but I fear I should develop into a fury if I undertook the training of small children. I like to play with and to pet them, but not to manage them. So it is a settled thing that if I were poor I could never teach. I couldn't sew. Since the invention of the sewing-machine *that* doesn't pay, for a woman may as well starve at once as do so by degrees. I couldn't teach—I couldn't sew," continued Avis, enumerating on her fingers. "I couldn't wash (look at my hands)—I couldn't cook, for I should get overheated and die of consumption. I couldn't do *anything*. Oh! yes, I might be a hair-dresser, but I feel sure that my occupation would put me in such a bad humor that some-



body's blonde or raven tresses would get well pulled. Oh! well, there's no use in joking about it, as there is no probability of my becoming so reduced; but if my income were cut off, I'd best be cut off too. In such an event Avis Frothingham could do nothing but die. But whither have I rambled with my thoughts? Jasper, put up that interminable piece of work and talk to me!"

"I am listening," said Jasper, finishing the copy she had been setting for Rob, and pushing the table from her.

"I have heard every word that you have said, have fully appreciated your position, have taken it in and digested it, if so I may speak."

"Well, darling, I'll change my subject. Did you receive the flowers?"

"There they are," said Jasper, pointing to the toilet.

"And the books?"

"Have finished reading them. Please return them to the owner, and thank him for the flowers as well as the books. Say to Mr. Rainsford I have enjoyed both more than I can express."

"I have a great mind not to do it," said Avis, pettishly.

"Why?"

"Because he was cross to me on one occasion. However, I don't bear malice in the least. We are good friends now. When do you think you can come downstairs?"

"As soon as my ankle is stronger. Why do you ask?"

"Oh! nothing. Some one wished to find out. Nobody you care about, though. How fares my 'cousin Abel?'"



"Don't ask impertinent questions," said Jasper, tapping her playfully upon her cheek.

"Well, we shall find out in course of time."

"You already know the state of the case," said Jasper. "Abel is my cousin."

"That is not an insuperable objection," responded Avis.

"Oh! by no means, you persistent little match-maker!" said Jasper. "I have had two very eligible matches arranged for me by interested friends. I hardly know which to accept."

"Who was the other, asked Avis?"

"Professor Reinberg!"

The two girls laughed heartily at this, and here ended their conversation.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

"COMPANY, company, company," grumbled Mammy as she beat up the bed in the best room at Sherwood. "*Times ain't is as they used to was.* There's Callie gone off somewhere, and I have to leave the baby to do the work. I believe young black folks is going raving abstracted since they were set free. What with the time they take up getting an edification, and getting religion, you can't get a lick of work out of 'em. If I was in master's place I'd send 'em every one off; they don't earn the salt in their bread.

"There's Callie now. She's been on the anxious bench



two weeks or more and ain't come through yet. When I was young, folks 'tended to their business if they were a mournin'.

"And what is edification? Old women going to school to be stood in a corner because they can't spell *c-o-w*. Catch me at it! I haven't got any of your book-learning, and don't know the *mortification* table from any other table; but one thing I does know, and that is my place. Yes, and I'll stick to it as sure as my name is Keziah Skipper.

"There's my son Dandy. He's just like me. He'll stick by master and hang on to his coat-tail and share master's last ten cents. For haven't I trained Dandy up in the ways of righteousness!"

Thus soliloquizing, Mammy put on the white counterpane, closed the shutters, and the room was ready for the next visitor destined to occupy it.

Mammy's commentary upon the times was a just one. Mr. Beresford's formerly large fortune was greatly impaired by the crippled condition of the South. Added to the fact that the negroes had been set free, and that many of the able-bodied ones had gone off, many of these same workingmen had left helpless wives and children upon their former masters' hands to be taken care of.

There were a few, however, who, like Mammy, took pride in the prestige of the Beresford name. Not only that, but strong local attachment—a knowledge that the master, though reduced himself, would "share his last cent" with them—kept these servants as fixtures upon the estate where most of them were born.



Yes, times had changed. Out upon the estate lands were going to waste that could not be fertilized, fences had gone to ruin and could not be replaced, bridges were washed away and could not be rebuilt. At the old homestead carpets were wearing out and there was no money to replace them. The family china was getting broken up, and odd cups and saucers were sometimes seen upon the table, and things generally were going down at Sherwood. And yet there was an air of comfort and repose about everything which gave all who visited the place the feeling of being *perfectly at home*.

This is the highest art attainable by a host, yet it was attained without effort upon Mr. Beresford's part.

The cordial grasp of the hand, the kindly glance of the eye, if we may so describe it, the graceful manner in which the man accepted his reverses, and the easy way in which everything seemed to glide on at Sherwood despite the widespread ruin around, were calculated to make a guest think that he would be welcome to spend the rest of his days with the Beresfords.

And where is there an old Virginia home that, no matter how full, cannot be made to accommodate more?

An alcove here, an unappropriated corner there, can be improvised into a chamber, and the hearty gratification of the host at the friendly visit will atone for all lack of elegance in the accommodation. Sherwood was many miles away from a railroad and very hard to get to ; but it was hard to get away from on a twofold account. There were always charming people there.

It was a sight to see the family going to the village church.



Visitors must be provided for, and coaches of the same date as the tall bedstead were often called into requisition. Then followed the gentlemen on horseback, and the little boys too, who were often skilled equestrians as soon as they were put in pants.

At church Rob snugged himself up to Jasper and was learning to use his prayer-book. The first Sunday he attached himself to her he drew forth a smile when in looking in the Psalter for the Psalms for the day he pulled her by the sleeve and whispered in her ear that he had "found the *Plaster*, but couldn't find the *Spasms*." He was much puzzled by the expression upon Jasper's face, but forgot all about it when she gave him her own book and started him in the service all right.

But we should not have left Jasper confined to a lounge in her room, and with a sprained ankle too. The truth is she went downstairs long ago—in fact, much sooner than she ought to have done.

When Mr. Beresford first saw her he could say nothing. But the deferential manner—the taking both of her hands in his, were a better tribute than words, and Jasper was satisfied.

Then, too, when she first went into the library Mr. Rainsford must needs take her crutch, offering his arm as a substitute until the best chair in the room was wheeled around for her benefit.

And Mr. Rainsford brought over delightful books from Maplewood which he volunteered to read, but always managed that it should be after school hours in order that Jasper could be present.



Ah, those were pleasant days, and Jasper was afraid she was getting spoiled by so much kindness, and could hardly enjoy the happy hours for fear that they might end.

Alas! they did end quite as suddenly as they commenced, for coming down stairs one morning just after she had abandoned the use of her crutch, Jasper's right foot caught in a hole in the carpet, and thus threw the whole of her weight upon the ankle which had been sprained.

Then she was a prisoner in her room again, and had to resort to the same treatment as at first.

And now time had glided along imperceptibly, and the golden autumn days were gone, and the crackling blaze of the cheerful wood-fire was pleasant to behold, especially when the November blasts came howling through the gorges of the mountains.

And Jasper still taught the children and looked anxiously for the time when she might venture once again from her chamber, for one friend at least seemed to have forgotten her during this second period of seclusion. There were no more books, no more flowers, no more kind messages from Mr. Rainsford; she had evidently faded from his recollection. Avis seemed all and all to him now. Riding, walking, or reading, they were forever together—and so the days still glided by.

November came and went, and Christmas was not far off, and yet Avis Frothingham lingered at Sherwood. What could it all mean? The neighboring gossips were much exercised upon the subject, and, by a series of winks and words, intimated to each other that they had the key to the mystery.



At last, radiant as a star, Avis floated into Jasper's room one day, and, dropping upon one knee beside her, said :

"Darling, have you heard the news?"

"No ; what news?" asked Jasper, not without a fluttering at her heart.

"That I am going away !"

"Is that all?"

"You cruel creature ! the idea of asking me if that is all !"

"I apologize humbly," said Jasper. "I could not express surprise because you had remained so much longer in the country than usual, and I felt sure that the climate would scare you off ere long. When are you going, Avis?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow ! Well now I *am* astonished. Are you sure you are going to-morrow?"

"Quite certain ; why?"

"Because if you are going to-morrow I shall expedite matters and take the bandage off of my ankle. I had intended doing so the day after to-morrow at any rate. Yes, I must go down and see you off. Who knows but what I may throw a slipper after you by way of good luck."

"Indeed you won't," said Avis, coloring no little. "I mean you must not on any account. It would be too great a risk to run. You know, darling, you went down too soon before, and paid dearly for it, did you not?"

"Thank you for your consideration, but I have made up my mind."

"And you will go down?" said Avis.

"Positively *will*," rejoined Jasper, not a little amused at



the concern expressed in the countenance of Avis Frothingham.

“ You are a self-willed creature, Jasper.”

“ That has been said of me before ; I thought I had reformed.”

“ Not quite,” responded Avis with glowing cheeks ; “ but, Jasper, why do you look at me with those fascinating eyes of yours as if——”

“ If what ?”

“ Oh, never mind. But you do look at me with such an earnest, singular look. I don’t know exactly how to describe it.”

“ Do you wish to know the subject of my thoughts ?” asked Jasper.

“ Yes—that is, if the subject is agreeable,” said Avis, with evident confusion.

“ I was thinking how remarkably well you looked—better than I ever saw you before.”

“ Were you really thinking such a pleasant thing about me ? Thank you, ever so much. Sidney told me the same only this morning. But I must go, darling ; I am to ride with Mr. Rainsford this afternoon.”

Avis turned back as she was leaving the room. “ Jasper, I like you—indeed I do. I shall miss you in the gay world.”

“ I like to be missed,” said Jasper.

“ Yes,” continued Avis, “ there are none there like you. The men, too, who fritter away their time around me—I do get so tired of them sometimes. I must keep up, though ; Avis Frothingham has a reputation to sustain.”



"Avis," responded Jasper, "the devotion of one noble, splendid man is worth all the attentions of the rest. Do not think the diet of one faithful heart too frugal fare." There was a slight tremor in the voice of the speaker, and she hesitated as if she felt she had almost gone too far with her gratuitous advice.

"Jasper, I must fly from you. If I do not, there is no telling what I shall say or do. There's Sidney now, and I must run and put on my riding-habit. Good-bye, dear," and kissing her hand, Avis suddenly disappeared through the open door.

Dandy had lighted the lamps and just finished placing a huge bunch of flowers in the middle of the tea-table, when the ponderous brass knocker resounded through the house so loudly that it caused him nearly to drop the plate of muffins which he had just taken up.

"Is Miss St. John in?" asked the person at the door, and scarcely waiting for a reply, he pushed by the servant and entered the sitting-room unasked.

"Seems to be in a hurry," said Dandy to himself. "'Pears like he thinks it's as much his house as anybody else's. I think he might a told his name," and Dandy went in search of Callie for the purpose of informing her that "somebody wanted to see Miss St. John."

"To see me!" exclaimed Jasper. "I can not go down this evening!" But Callie was out of hearing, and there was no one to take the message.

Jasper pondered the matter over in her mind for a moment. She intended leaving her room in the morning. A



few hours could make no difference. Yes, "she would see the visitor." Some slight change must be made in her toilet, however. The handsome black silk, which had been her mother's, but which, remodelled, well became Jasper's figure, was taken from the wardrobe. "It is almost too dressy," said Jasper as she looked over her shoulder at the rich folds that floated off in a train behind her. But it was on now, and dressing was quite troublesome of late. Yes, "she would wear it." The dainty lace collar, fastened at her throat with a knot of rose-colored ribbon, lent a softness to an expression already refined and interesting, and as Jasper surveyed herself in the old-fashioned mirror, she was quite well satisfied with the suitability of her costume.

Jasper took longer to dress than usual, and the gentleman downstairs was becoming quite impatient, as he showed by striding up and down the room. Finally he stood with folded arms in front of one of the family portraits. The parlor-door was open, and Jasper was almost up to where the stranger was standing before he saw her, for she was behind him, and he was evidently absorbed in the study of the pictures. He did not even hear the voice of Avis Frothingham as she came up the steps of the verandah talking to Sidney Rainsford, saying she "had never had so charming a ride in all her life."

But suddenly the visitor in the parlor finished his criticism of Mr. Beresford's ancestor in the ruffled shirt-bosom. Suddenly something caused the stranger to turn, and he beheld Jasper—so pale, so quiet, so almost beautiful, and leaning upon her crutch!



“Jasper !” said he, “Jasper, you have been ill !”

Jasper was too much astonished to reply, and Abel Grantland, ere she could say him nay, strained his cousin to his bosom in one long, fond embrace, and pressed a kiss upon her lips.

Just then Avis and Mr. Rainsford stood in the parlor-door. They saw it all, and Avis, with a low, musical laugh, whispered to her escort, “We are de trop ; shall we go to the sitting-room ?”

“By all means,” replied Mr. Rainsford, endeavoring to appear indifferent in spite of the dark frown upon his brow, and only too glad to get away without being observed by the inmates of the room.

“What on earth is the matter with everybody?” grumbled Dandy. “Nobody wants any tea ; the hot muffins has gotten cold, and when I asked the strange gentleman to walk in to supper, he looked more like he could have eaten me than the muffins. White folks is too curious. There’s mistress—she’s got a headache, and master ain’t here ; but why can’t t’other folks eat ? Well, I’ll just set the tea things away, because I can’t spend my time standing up here all night.”

Dandy wondered if the gentleman in the parlor who came to see Miss St. John was going to spend the night at Sherwood.

Whereupon Callie informed him not. She had overheard the gentleman tell Tom “not to put up his horse : he was going back to Chatsworth.”

“Whoever he is, he means business,” said Dandy, confidentially. “He ain’t no Southern gentleman either.”



“What does you know about it?” said Callie, contemptuously.

“I knows what I knows; 'cause a Southern gentleman never rides behind a horse when he can travel *on* one. Don't you reckon if he was one of our gentlemen he would just a galloped over here like Mr. Rainsford, or Mr. Mandeville, or any of the rest.”

“Much you knows 'bout it,” said Callie, helping herself to the supper which no one else seemed to relish.

“I haven't been livin' in the Sherwood family all my life for nothin'. I knows one gentleman from 'tother: I knows who is who,” persisted Dandy, who was proud of his antecedents, and intended some reflection upon California, who was, comparatively speaking, a new servant, and had rejected his addresses in the bargain.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE was an unusual stir about the Sherwood mansion the following morning. Mammy had roused up her fellow-servants before day. Miss Frothingham would not be in time for the Fairy Belle unless she could reach Chatsworth by six o'clock A.M. It was a dreadful hour for visitors to leave, but Mr. Beresford was hospitable enough not only to be in place himself, but to have all the children wakened to speed the parting guest.



It had been Mr. Beresford's intention to accompany Avis to Ashwood Dépôt himself, but a younger and more agreeable escort had volunteered, and of course Mr. Beresford resigned.

On that chill November morning a fire blazed in the immense fireplace in the sitting-room, and so comfortable was everything within doors that it was hard to realize that snowflakes were flying about in the air, and the far-off Blue Ridge and Alleghany Mountains were capped with white. Breakfast was ready, and all were in place to enjoy it except Avis. Soon she also joined the family, looking rather pale, but more beautiful than usual in her winter wraps and furs, and the dark velvet hat whose only trimming was the graceful plume which dropped across the crown and set off to advantage her golden braids of hair.

"You bad child!" she exclaimed as she saw Jasper.

"I take Miss St. John's part; she has been very good and patient all these weeks," said Mr. Beresford. "I am heartily glad to have her with us again. We missed her, did we not, my dear?"

Mrs. Beresford bore testimony to the truth of the assertion, and Jasper made acknowledgment of her gratification.

The breakfast was hurried through, for Dandy and Tom and various others were dragging trunks through the hall, and there was such an atmosphere of unrest about the house that it seemed to take away everybody's appetite.

Finally the motion was made to leave the table, and as Jasper did so she almost came in collision with Mr. Rainsford in the hall. Her astonishment at seeing him at Sher-



wood at such an early hour can be better imagined than described.

“ Mr. Rainsford !—I am glad—” Jasper’s words were frozen upon her lips.

“ Good morning, Miss St. John,” said Sidney Rainsford coldly.

Was this the man whose voice had assumed a tenderer and softer intonation whenever he addressed her? Had he not carried her in his arms and called her “ Jasper !” and there, within sound of the roaring torrent which foamed below them, had he not spoken words too sacred for any ear but her own !

“ I had not expected to meet you at such an early hour,” said Jasper, recovering herself and withdrawing her hand which had been partly extended.

“ I am not surprised,” responded Mr. Rainsford still coldly but with great deference. “ I accompany Avis to Oakwood—indeed, I think I shall go all the way to the city with her. She is too fragile to travel alone.”

He bowed politely, and passed on to give some directions to Dandy about the trunks.

In front of Sherwood house stood the family coach, and behind the coach a baggage wagon, and from Jasper’s quiet nook in the library she saw that all the preparations for the journey were completed. She heard the good-bye of Avis to each member of the family, and an occasional “ Thank’e m’am ” as Avis dropped something into the hand of each servant.

“ Good-bye, my precious baby ; don’t forget aunt Avis.



Good-bye, Rob ; Avis will send the velocipede Christmas. Good-bye, Tip and Tiny ; if you will not kindle any more bonfires you shall find some Roman candles on the Christmas tree. Good-bye, darlings." She kissed Mr. and Mrs. Beresford.

" But where is Jasper ?"

" I am here," said Jasper, with an unnatural calmness as she came from her hiding-place.

" Good-bye, darling," said Avis, giving her a warm embrace just as Sidney Rainsford came up. " Good-bye, dear—it is all turning out just as I said it would, isn't it, Mr. Rainsford ?"

" Didn't we see the meeting last evening? Yes, Mr. Rainsford seemed petrified with astonishment. But women have an intuition in such matters, and as soon as I whispered 'de trop,' my companion came to his senses and we accomplished a rapid retreat."

All this was uttered in a hurried, excited manner, which left no room for reply on Jasper's part. She stood as one in a trance. She felt that she was embraced, but her own lips refused to make response ; she knew that Mr. Rainsford had coldly touched her hand and said " Farewell," and still she was dumb. She saw him draw a mantle closer around the shoulders of Avis ; she heard him twice call her Avis ; she noted that he watched her as if he feared one breath of November's wintry wind might deal rudely with her. She heard Avis say " That will do, darling," as he offered her his own cloak ; then saw the pretty blush upon her cheek as she said, " Excuse me, I thought I was speak-



ing to Jasper." She saw all this. And now the drivers cracked their whips, Avis, buried in furs in a corner of the carriage, kissed her hand, Mr. Rainsford touched his hat—and they were gone.

"Mamma, mamma, come to Miss St. John," said Tiny, "she is dying!"

Mrs. Beresford almost threw Bessie into the nurse's arms.

"Where, my dear?"

"In the library!"

Tiny had found her way into that room sure enough, and seeing Jasper upon the lounge, wanted to know if she "wasn't so sorry aunt Avis and Mr. Rainsford had gone away?"

Question after question of the same kind having been asked and unanswered, the child crept softly to Jasper, touched her forehead—it was cold. Looked into her eyes—they were staring blankly at the wall in front of her. Then suddenly the death-like pallor of the face she was peering into seemed to strike terror into the heart of Tiny, and with a cry of real grief she burst from the room.

If there was anything on earth that could make Jasper forget her own sorrow, it was that of other people. The child's scream roused her instantly, and when Mrs. Beresford reached the room Jasper was sitting bolt upright upon the lounge.

"Tiny, my dear, why did you frighten me so!" exclaimed her mother.

Tiny rushed to Jasper and threw her arms around her.

"I didn't tell a story, did I, Miss St. John? I haven't



made up a story since you told us about Ananias and Sapphira. Mamma, she *was* dead, weren't you, Miss St. John?"

"I suppose you thought so, Tiny, but the dead do not come to life so easily. I recollect nothing except that when I first leaned back upon the pillow a numbness seemed to take possession of me, which I found it impossible to shake off until I heard a cry of distress."

"I understand how that is," said Mrs. Beresford. "I have suffered so much from ill health that I know every pain and ache to which mortals are liable. I can readily account for the symptoms you describe. Mr. Beresford and myself came to the conclusion some time ago that you tax yourself entirely too much with the children. Give them a holiday; you are not well enough now to be troubled with them."

"But I am," said Jasper earnestly. "Indeed, they form my chief interest in life," and she caught Mrs. Beresford's hand, which lay upon her own, and pressed it fervently.

Mrs. Beresford was too yielding to contend with such a nature as Jasper's. After a vain attempt at persuasion the point was yielded by Mrs. B. quite gracefully, who hoped that Miss St. John would never feel herself obliged to teach when she was not well.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN the carriage containing Avis Frothingham and Sidney Rainsford drove from Mr. Beresford's door, Jasper felt that a scene in the drama of her life was ended, the curtain fallen, and one of the *dramatis personæ* gone forever. She pressed one hand to her aching heart and left the window from which she had been watching the departure of the travellers. How far away seemed the last few months into which a whole lifetime of enjoyment had been crowded! But the future—how dark—who could brave it!

"Yes, he belongs to her now. I observed his tender manner; I saw him look proudly on her beauty. Who was I, that I dared cherish a few words spoken in the heat of excitement out of intense pity! It would be best if this heart of mine were adamant." And thus communing with herself, Jasper seemed to have attained her wish and turned to stone when Tiny found her in the library.

"I love you," said the little child, and the arms tightened around Jasper's neck. "I loves you sure enough," said Tiny again. Still no response. Jasper heard as one in a trance. She could give no sign of approval or return. It seemed that she must hereafter be passive, an object only, not an actor in life's drama.

"I love you!" said Tiny again and again. Then it was



that the child seemed stricken with terror and rushed from the room in search of her mother.

Abel's visit was soon over. He could not win the heart he had trampled upon for so many years. It could not be bought by all his promises of freedom from toil, nor by the offer of comparative wealth ; and he returned to the North feeling that he had lost his only chance of earthly happiness.

Sherwood was rather quiet during the winter season. The roads were generally impassable which led to the nearest dépôt, and the inmates of the different country houses were dependent upon each other for society. Occasional visitors for a day or night dropped in, but these visitors were of a different stamp from the gay summer friends who, to avoid the heated term in the city, took wing for the far-off blue mountains. Yes, quiet reigned supreme at Sherwood, except when some college mate of Mr. Beresford's braved both weather and roads and came to enjoy a talk about old times. Then would the huge logs be piled on almost to the top of the tall brass and-irons. The pipes would be filled, and wreathed in smoke the two friends would review the past, refreshing each other's memory as to many an anecdote of early days, though the hero had moved away to the far West, or slept the last sleep in the family burying-ground.

The chief object of interest in the country during the winter was the mail. Mr. Beresford could not live without his mail. The world might turn upside-down and he would never find it out if he did not get his mail ; so rain, hail, or shine, Tom went to Chatsworth on horseback every morning with the mail-bag, though he was often rewarded for his



pains by only bringing back a postal or two and the inevitable paper which had been taken in the family before Mr. Beresford was born.

Mr. Rainsford had been heard from. "Avis made the trip without fatigue—would go to New York soon, and from there to Europe—and,—bless my soul!" said Mr. Beresford, reading out bits of news from the letter, "Rainsford has sold Maplewood and is going with her. Of course matters must be settled between them, but why sell his place! Yes, sold Maplewood to an Englishman!"

"How can we expect there to be life in the old land yet if the bone and sinew are taken out! Young men should not desert the State." Whereupon Mr. Beresford cried "for shame!" and forthwith wrote Sidney a letter giving him a piece of his mind on the subject; but Sidney Rainsford was inexorable, and Maplewood was sold.

Christmas was very near. Letters poured in now from Avis. Presents came also, to be hidden away until the great day, when they would appear on the Christmas-tree.

"Just like Avis," said Mrs. Beresford as she unfolded one package after another. "Dear, generous child; she throws away money. See, Miss St. John, what an elegant set of furs she sends you. She says Mr. Rainsford selected them; he is a fine judge you know. Yes, and here is the velocipede—and here are the Roman candles. And now we must be thinking of the plum-pudding, and the fruit-cake and jelly, and the big turkey for Christmas day."

In reply to this last remark Callie assured her mistress that the turkey was as fat as it could be to walk, "and I knows a



fat turkey when I sees it," added Callie. "My mother used to be hired to Mr. Greenway, and raised dozens of turkeys for him every year. She always fed 'em high too. If enough wasn't given out for 'em she *would have* it; why, my mother *would steal for her turkeys just the same as she would for herself.*" Thus Callie, in endeavoring to prove her mother's zeal in the department assigned her on the farm where she was hired, unwittingly bore testimony to her habitual dishonesty. And yet, with all their faults, the five millions of slaves in the South during the war won the respect and gratitude of their owners. There has never been in the history of the world any instance of such devotion as these slaves showed to the wives and children of their masters during the Civil War. To quote the language of a celebrated divine, "Slavery brought its evils to master as well as slave, but God meant it for good or it would never have existed. Where slavery had no other end but selfishness it was a curse to master as well as to slave; but in many instances the relation was sanctified by that Christian love which taught the master to rule remembering that he also had a Master in heaven."

"Knowing that the war largely influenced their condition as slaves, that the failure of their own masters would be the guarantee of their freedom, that the women and children were, through the issues of war, left at home without their natural protectors, there is yet left not one single act of violence, not one deed of blood to record against them. This fact alone would speak volumes for both master and slave, and answer all possible cavils as to any necessary antagonism



of races. Yes, reared in the same household, these Africans have been the foster-mothers and nurses to white children, and often showed more devotion to the latter than to their own kin."

Christmas was coming, and Mr. Beresford said something must be done to show an appreciation of the season. He would invite a few friends from the neighborhood and one or two from Richmond. "By the by," said he, "there is Faircastle. He's nothing of a sportsman, it is true, but I think he is just the man to enjoy a quiet time in the country. Immersed in business, he will never come except during a holiday, and, strange to say, as often as we have met, he has never been entertained at Sherwood. Wife, we will invite him." So the invitation was extended in a few days and accepted in the same length of time, and the Sherwood children counted the hours impatiently ere the arrival of Santa Claus, while their mouths fairly watered at the sight of the mince-pies, cheese-cakes, and other good things that were accumulating in the pantry.

Mammy exerted herself to keep Callie up to her business, and to see that the bed-rooms were neat and comfortable.

"Faircastle ! Faircastle !" said Mammy, pricking up her ears, "I've heard that name before. I've heard of Faircastle, and I've heard of Worthington, and I've heard of Marchmont. I knows what I knows. I knows about the great Worthington lawsuit, but I wonder if it is the same set of Faircastles. Well, I'll find out as sure as my name is Keziah Skipper, and if he is, he gets what no Marchmont will ever have, that's certain."



Mrs. Beresford was too much accustomed to Mammy's rambling way of talking to pay much attention to her reminiscences of old times, and left her to the enjoyment of the soliloquy which was sure to follow any recollection of the past.

Rumors reached the Beresfords that Avis was having a glorious time in New York, and Avis wrote of Mr. Tracey (the father of Mrs. Beresford) that he was the same dear good old guardian.

"I have but one fault on earth to find with him," wrote Avis, "and that is when he troubles me with business. He has given that up at last, however ; he has come to the conclusion that I am a spoilt child and won't be bothered with such matters. So dear Mr. Tracey invests my money as he pleases, and all I ask of him is that he will furnish me as much as I can spend while abroad, and keep it a secret from me if he loses all the rest."

Avis wound up her letter with "oceans of love to everybody," and with "how she would like to have a peep at dear old Sherwood during the holidays !" etc.

Christmas morning came, and the children were up with the dawn, and soon might be heard every variety of sound which a toy menagerie was capable of producing ; and Rob singed his own eyebrows and frightened Mammy out of her wits with the fire-crackers found in his stocking, and Tip swallowed a marble nearly as big as his fist, and had to be beaten in the back until it came up again, and Tiny dissected the toy dogs and dolls to see what they were made of, and the baby cried with a fit of the colic, having been surreptitiously fed upon an overdose of plum-cake by Polly, and everything



went on just as one might suppose it would go on at Sherwood.

The guests came and enjoyed the fine old Virginia hams, the oysters sent up for the occasion from Norfolk, and, in fact, everybody showed an appreciation of the good fare which had been so invitingly prepared.

Mr. Faircastle proved to be a pleasant man, but rather stiff—a real old bachelor. Jasper often caught the keen brown eyes of this elderly attorney fastened upon her. “He knew her to be a St. John at the first glance. When he was a boy he remembered seeing her father once at his own father’s house ;” but after these few remarks the conversation fell flat, and Mr. Faircastle sipped his wine and seemed to be thinking of something far away from Sherwood.

But all pleasant things must come to an end, and Christmas as well as any other time, and Mr. Beresford’s friends all returned to their homes with the exception of Mr. Faircastle. He was heartily welcome, however. Everybody *was* at Sherwood, and a few days developed the gentleman’s motive for prolonging his stay.

He was waiting for papers—business papers which he wished to consult while at Sherwood. They came safely to hand, and Mr. Faircastle was heard to remark while examining them, “A remarkable circumstance ! a very remarkable circumstance !”

The family had retired with the exception of Mr. Beresford and his friend, when Mr. Faircastle, knocking the ashes from his pipe, remarked that, “If not too late, he would like to discuss a little matter with Miss St. John.”



“Certainly ; Mr. Beresford would see that she was informed. He was rather under the impression that she was in the habit of burning the midnight lamp. At any rate he would inquire,” and so saying, Mr. Beresford left the room, feeling that the interview should be private.

Jasper received the message and obeyed the summons, but wondered no little as she did so what could have procured her the honor of an interview with a man of Mr. Faircastle’s business habits at so late an hour of the night.

That gentleman made many apologies as Jasper entered the room. Said that urgent business would call him from Sherwood on the following day, and he wished to have a conversation with her before leaving. He brought his chair quite near her own, and commenced in a mysterious voice.

“I have here an article of apparently little value, which article has come into my possession since I entered this house.” He took from his pocket an old-fashioned snuff-box.

“This,” said he, “has been kept for years by a servant in the employment of Mr. Beresford, that servant being Keziah Skipper.”

“What on earth have I to do with that,” thought Jasper.

“The said snuff-box was bequeathed to Keziah by her mother, Susan Skipper, who was also the foster-mother of young Marchmont Worthington. You are, I suppose (although you have been absent from Virginia since you were a very small child), sufficiently acquainted with the family history to be aware of the fact that your great uncle, Governor Worthington, and his son Marchmont were victims



of the terrible conflagration of the theatre at Richmond in the year 1811, when at least a hundred and twenty persons were either crushed or burned to death."

Jasper had often heard so.

"There was much litigation as to which survived the longest, many believing the testimony of a person who swore to having seen the boy outside of the building after all within must have perished. Finally the son was declared to have survived by a few moments, and such being the case, he became heir to the property, but not until the matter had been stoutly contested by Governor Worthington's only brother Roscoe, who was also your great-grandfather.

Jasper had heard the same.

"The case is quite clear, is it not?" said Mr. Faircastle, endeavoring to discard all law terms and adapt his phraseology to the capacity of his young listener.

"Quite so," responded Jasper.

"Now, as the boy's mother was dead, his grandmother on his mother's side inherited the property."

"So I have heard."

"Whereas, but for those few moments which it was conjectured the boy lived after his father had perished, the property would have gone to Roscoe Worthington."

Jasper had heard that also.

"But, as I have said," continued Mr. Faircastle, "the grandmother, Mrs. Marchmont, gained the case, and, dying not long afterwards, left her fortune to a sister residing abroad."



Jasper had never heard that, or if she had, it had escaped her memory, as from her early youth she had been cut off from all who might have reminded her of it.

“ But this snuff-box, it seems, was thrown from a window of the theatre while the building was in flames and all possibility of escape without assistance was cut off. Yes, this little box,” continued Mr. Faircastle, “ if produced at the right time, would have saved a world of trouble, and would have done what the finest legal talent in Virginia could not accomplish—namely, turned over Governor Worthington’s property to the rightful owner—namely, Roscoe Worthington ; for listen,” said Mr. Faircastle as he drew still nearer the lamp and proceeded to unfold a scrap of paper which he had taken from the snuff-box. “ First, however, let us imagine the situation of Governor Worthington on that fearful night. Hundreds of terror-stricken human beings were rushing against and over one another towards the doors ; alas ! these doors opened upon the inside, and the frantic crowd was pushed against them, thus preventing all possibility of escape in that way. Some were trampled to death, some killed by falling timbers, and many were suffocated. A few scrambled to the windows, threw them open, and, though enveloped in flames, leaped to the ground.

“ It is very evident that Governor Worthington had succeeded in reaching a place of comparative safety at one of the windows, although his son had already been killed. A man of great coolness and decision of character, he bided his time. It is very evident also that Governor Worthington, who was a fleshy man, felt that his only hope was in



securing some assistance. Let us imagine him, then, standing guard on that fearful night over the dead body of his son. The groans and shrieks of the dying are hushed, the lurid flames have licked the ceiling, and already the rafters have commenced falling.

“There is still one chance left. He takes from his pocket a portion of a letter, and by the light of that fearful glare writes these words in pencil :

“ ‘Send help—to farthest east window—I watch beside my dead son. ‘WALLACE WORTHINGTON.’

“Enclosing this bit of paper in the snuff-box he was in the habit of carrying, he throws it from the window, trusting to the chance of its being picked up. Alas ! those words were the last ever written by Governor Worthington, and it is probable that he was ushered into eternity the next moment.

“Now to the point,” said Mr. Faircastle, returning the paper to the snuff-box where it had been concealed for half a century. “This proves what was contested for so many years—proves that Governor Worthington outlived his son, proves that Roscoe Worthington was the lawful heir, and proves beyond doubt that you, who are the sole living descendant of Roscoe Worthington, have a right to all that property which should have descended to him, but which fell to Mrs. Marchmont and was bequeathed by her to her sister. A remarkable coincidence! a truly wonderful circumstance !”

Jasper was too much astonished to reply, so much good fortune seemed to have deprived her of the use of her tongue.



“ Now, my dear young lady, you are an orphan. For generations back there has been an intimacy between the Faircastles and Worthingtons ——” and Mr. Faircastle hesitated a while. “ I volunteer my services, and will take pleasure in resorting to the necessary steps towards restoring you to your rights.”

Jasper accepted this offer with thanks, feeling, nevertheless, that it must all surely be a dream.

And now Mr. Faircastle drew his chair still closer, and unfolded many a musty paper, examining the handwriting, which proved to be identical with that upon the precious scrap he hoarded. Then reviewing the history of the family from the time the founder of it came to Virginia from England during the reign of George the First, he beguiled the hours far into the night, and was only aroused to a consciousness of that fact by the tall clock in an alcove somewhere in the hall.

“ Bless my soul!” exclaimed Mr. Faircastle, “ I had no idea it was so late. I leave at an early hour, and must to bed. Good-night, Miss St. John.”

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## CHAPTER XXV.

MAMMY was right after all. Jasper had been disposed to treat the affair as an old woman's tale, and Mammy's account of the suit had gone into one ear and out of the other ; yet there was much truth in the old negro woman's



gossip, and there was a value belonging to the long-concealed snuff-box of which Mammy herself had not the slightest conception ; and the scrap of paper might as well have been a blank as far as she was concerned, for not knowing how to read, she had never attempted to decipher the writing upon it.

Her idea of the worth of the heirloom lay in its intrinsic value. She jealously guarded her treasure from mortal gaze because she had promised her mother on her death-bed to do so.

She had also promised that the snuff-box should be kept for a Faircastle, and she had held on to it all these years until she had met with a Faircastle, and if she had died before doing so, she had intended to have had that old relic buried in the coffin with herself.

It must be said, however, that Mammy had imbibed her mother's views on the subject, and evidently retained the snuff-box more to spite the Marchmonts than for any other reason. They had grasped every cent of a property to which they had no right ; they should not possess this last treasure, this silver toy, lined with gold, with the name of Wallace Worthington engraved upon the lid.

It was remarkable how that same toy was found. The day after the conflagration at the theatre in 1811, Susan Skipper, who was the foster-mother of young Marchmont Worthington, joined the crowd of persons who, with a morbid curiosity, hung around the scene of the disaster. There seemed to be a fascination about the spot. She lingered there for some time. Suddenly her eye caught sight of the



snuff-box ; she knew it in a moment ; it was her master's ; and rescuing it from the pile of rubbish in which it lay, she hid it in her bosom and left the place.

As to Mammy's knowledge of the lawsuit, she had acquired it pretty much as a parrot would do. She picked up law terms when she was a girl while waiting at her master's table, and, proud of her acquirements, she was always glad of an opportunity of making a display of her knowledge, for by doing so she had gained a reputation for great wisdom among people of her own color.

When she disclosed the fact to Jasper that one of the heirs was not far off, she alluded to a descendant of the Marchmonts.

Mammy knew that Jasper was related to the Worthingtons, but the old woman did not know in what way, had not traced up the line of descent—in fact, to use her own words, “ she often forgot more than she knew.”

Mr. Faircastle was naturally reticent. He said nothing to any one of the great discovery he had made. He probably preferred maturing his plans, hunting up the Marchmont heir, and making sure of swooping down upon his devoted head with Jasper's claim for the property. On his return to the city he went to work like a beaver. Whole volumes of family history were unearthed, letters were taken down from dusty pigeon-holes, and even the missing portion of the letter was found from which had been torn the scrap on which those last words were written.

Yes, Mr. Faircastle accumulated undeniable facts, proof that could not be set aside, that Roscoe Worthington had



been kept out of his rights, and the busy little lawyer, having made ready for the onslaught, put in the claim.

It came like a thunderbolt upon a certain lawyer who had held the property in charge, and who had considered the great Worthington lawsuit a thing of the past—never to be raked up again.

Mr. Faircastle had been long enough in Mr. Beresford's family to read and appreciate the character of Jasper St. John, and the favorable opinion entertained of her was fostered by the unqualified praise bestowed upon Jasper by Mr. Faircastle's friend. Hence it is not surprising that the sedate lawyer felt an enthusiasm in the cause of his young client, which enthusiasm bade fair to sweep away every obstacle to his success.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

EVERYTHING had subsided into its usual calm and quiet routine at Sherwood. The children's lessons went on, the winter was quite far advanced, and Jasper had almost forgotten about the great Worthington lawsuit. She had not confided her secret to the Beresfords, simply because she had left the whole matter in Mr. Faircastle's hands, and she supposed he would disclose the particulars of the case whenever he felt it advisable to do so.

Mr. Faircastle appeared at Sherwood suddenly one morn-



ing before breakfast. It was plain that he came to see Miss St. John, for he had not been in the house five minutes before he asked after her. Mr. Beresford had taken it into his head that the lawyer's suit was of a different nature from what it really was, consequently Mr. B. left the room as soon as Jasper entered it. Mr. Faircastle, as usual, took out package after package of letters yellow with age, and reviewed the whole state of the case. The Marchmont heir had been notified that an heir of the Worthingtons laid claim to the property, and the suit was about to commence.

"But my object in visiting Sherwood at this time, Miss St. John, is to suggest to you that the opposing counsel may offer a compromise. To my mind," said Mr. Faircastle, "it would be folly to listen for a moment to such a proposition. My advice to you, therefore, is that you swerve not from the stand which, as my client, I advise you to take," and the gentleman read out long prosy articles of his own prepared to prove the point in question.

Jasper was greatly relieved when a stop was put to this dry proceeding by Dandy's ringing the breakfast-bell. Loud and long he rang it, for he had reason to fear that Miss St. John's visitor might prove indifferent to the call. Mr. Faircastle was so absorbed in the explanation of the law to Jasper that it is more than probable that he would not have heard the summons if Jasper had not called his attention to it. He then put up his papers, remarking that he would resume business after breakfast.

To tell the truth, the little gentleman had made such an early start from Chatsworth that the bracing mountain air



had sharpened his appetite, and he followed Jasper from the room with the mental resolve of doing full justice to all that was set before him.

Mrs. Beresford was not well, and sent Callie to ask that Jasper would pour out the coffee. "And mistress says please come to her room after breakfast," added the servant; "she wants you to attend to things for her while Mr. Faircastle is here."

Mrs. Beresford was not one of those housewives who would go to bed from mortification on account of the failure of a pudding; nevertheless, she took great pride in her table. The announcement that Mr. Faircastle had arrived had awakened some concern about her bill of fare for the day, and as Jasper on former occasions had given evidence of her knowledge in such affairs, she was called in for consultation.

Mr. Faircastle finished his second cup of coffee and accepted an invitation from Mr. Beresford to join him in taking a smoke. As the former gentleman left the dining-room he intimated to Jasper that, after disposing of his cigar, he would meet her in the library and finish looking over the papers he had brought for her inspection.

Jasper now went to Mrs. Beresford's room and soon relieved her mind by telling her that the breakfast was all that could be desired, and that the guest had shown a hearty appreciation of it; and as for dinner, Mr. Faircastle said he would be on his way to Richmond by the time that hour arrived.

"But sit down one moment," said Mrs. Beresford as



Jasper prepared to leave the room. "I have a letter from my father which has filled me with concern for dear Avis."

Jasper returned, and Mrs. Beresford continued: "The dear child has been desperately ill—so ill that at one time her life was despaired of. She is easily carried away by excitement, and going out night after night, first to the opera, then to a ball, has not been the best thing in the world for her. But, added to this," continued Mrs. Beresford as she glanced over the open letter in her hand, "my father writes me that there is trouble in store for Avis of a very serious nature. You know she never could bear to be worried with business, and lately my father, who is her guardian as well as her lawyer, has thought it best to humor her and not to speak to her of money matters. It has come to that point, however, when this can be done no longer, for I judge from what is said in this letter that there is every prospect that she will be left without a penny. Poor dear child! so delicate! so helpless! She little dreams what is in store for her, and the physician says she must be kept in ignorance of the state of her affairs until she rallies sufficiently to stand the shock. The worst is that the trip to Europe must be abandoned. That was all we looked to that might build up the constitution of the dear child. When that is given out, and Avis is told the whole truth, I fear it will put her in her grave."

"How sad!" exclaimed Jasper, with genuine sympathy in her voice, while her thoughts reverted to the time when Avis had acknowledged that she could do nothing for a support if she met with a reverse of fortune.



"It is distressing indeed," responded Mrs. Beresford. "The whole affair has given me a fearful headache, for while Avis will always be heartily welcome to a home with us, I fear she will miss many luxuries to which she has been accustomed from her birth. But do not let me detain you too long. I hear Mr. Beresford calling for you; go, dear. We will talk this matter over some other time, for I know you sympathize with me in my anxiety about Avis."

"Coming!" said Jasper, as she heard Mr. Beresford's deep, full voice from the bottom of the stairs.

Once more Jasper was back in the library, and Mr. Faircastle was deep in the explanation of dry points which he seemed to think it was necessary for Miss St. John to understand.

"I fear I have not been explicit enough," said the gentleman, after waiting in vain for a response from his client.

Jasper had to acknowledge that her mind had been on something else, and begging Mr. Faircastle's pardon, she promised to be more attentive.

"I was saying," continued Mr. Faircastle, "that a compromise would be out of the question, as all the facts of the case would prove, and I should be false to my trust to advise such a course."

Now Jasper felt that her being consulted upon the matter at all was a mere form. She was perfectly willing to leave the whole affair in Mr. Faircastle's hands, and she responded to that effect, and thus having gotten rid of all responsibility, like any other girl of her age, she turned the subject in a most unbusiness-like manner by asking to look at the



remarkable snuff-box ; her thoughts had been elsewhere when she saw it on a former occasion.

“ By a very singular chance I have it with me,” said Mr. Faircastle, feeling in his pocket at the same time. “ I was showing it to a friend in my office just before I left the city, and when I wished to deposit it in a place of security, I found that my partner had gone off with the key of the safe in his possession.”

Mr. Faircastle here handed the snuff-box to Jasper.

“ And this was my uncle Worthington’s !” she exclaimed. “ Strange that such a trifle should prove so powerful an agent in my behalf.”

“ A remarkable circumstance !—quite a remarkable circumstance !” responded Mr. Faircastle. “ Ignorance has kept the owner out of his rights—I speak of the ignorance of the woman who preserved so religiously that scrap of paper.”

Jasper’s eyes dwelt thoughtfully upon the writing for a moment. “ By the by,” said she, “ you have never told me who the person is that I am about to dispossess of this property.”

Mr. Faircastle first closed the door of the library, and drawing his chair still nearer to Jasper’s, said, “ It is true that the situation is embarrassing, but sentiment must not be considered in such matters.”

“ I do not understand you,” responded Jasper as her eye still wandered over the scrap of paper in her hand as if she looked there for some clue to the mystery.

“ You are acquainted with the Marchmont heir,” said



Mr. Faircastle. "Your intercourse has hitherto been pleasant—I may say—friendly. I assure you I shall take no course that will not be just and honorable; leave all to me."

"But I must know who this myth is," said Jasper. "Indeed, Mr. Faircastle, I should have been informed before. The truth is, I have been preoccupied of late, and have not taken as much interest in the case as I should have done under different circumstances."

"Is it possible!" ejaculated Mr. Faircastle. "You do not realize the importance of this matter I suppose."

"You are wrong there," said Jasper. "I fully appreciate your efforts to restore a competency to one who is dependent upon her own exertions for a support."

Mr. Faircastle bowed an acknowledgment of the compliment.

"And now," said he, "I must at your request divulge a secret which, if I could have done so, it would have been best to have kept a little longer."

"I prefer hearing it," said Jasper, with some determination, evincing by her manner that she did not wish to be treated as a child.

"As you desire," responded Mr. Faircastle, tying up a package of papers and keeping his client in suspense for a moment or two. At last he put the documents aside and added slowly, "That little scrap of writing which you now hold in your hand deprives Avis Marchmont Frothingham of all property inherited from——"

"*Avis Frothingham!*" exclaimed Jasper, springing almost from her seat, while the snuff-box rolled to the floor and



almost into the fire before Mr. Faircastle could rescue it. "*Avis Frothingham!*" she said again.

"Avis Marchmont Frothingham," reiterated Mr. Faircastle.

A pained expression came over Jasper's countenance. Probably she was thinking of that moment of anguish when Avis gave her the parting kiss, but uttered words which put forever a gulf between Jasper St. John and Sidney Rainsford. Perhaps the evil one was now working in that human heart, whispering the insinuating words, "Revenge is sweet," for Mr. Faircastle observed the dark cloud upon Jasper's brow, and the momentary flash that lighted up her fine gray eyes.

"How strange! This, then, is what would probably put Avis in her grave if it came to her knowledge."

"I know nothing of that, my dear young lady. My correspondence has been entirely with her lawyer, Mr. Tracey."

"The loss of fortune would prevent the tour of Europe and foster the disease upon her with which she is threatened," said Jasper.

"I know nothing of *that*," persisted Mr. Faircastle.

Jasper still fingered the faded scrap of paper, but the troubled expression was all gone; she had come to a decision.

"Mr. Faircastle," said Jasper, "we must abandon this case now, and perhaps forever. I cannot consent to do any thing that could bring such disaster to a fellow-creature. I reserve to myself the privilege of waiting to take action in the matter until there is less risk to one whom I formerly regarded as a friend."



“ You cannot be in earnest, my dear young friend.”

“ I mean all that I say,” responded Jasper. “ *I* have the means of support at my command ; Avis has not. *I* have health and strength ; Avis is fragile.”

“ You are full of the romance of youth now,” said Mr. Faircastle. “ I fear you will regret this when you discover that by some poverty is considered a crime.”

“ That is only the feeling of vulgar souls, who the moment they are stripped of wealth are the most pitiable of God’s creatures,” responded Jasper.

“ And your decision is unalterable ?” said Mr. Faircastle, with a shade of disappointment in his tone.

“ For the present—yes ! Perhaps forever ! But do not think me ungrateful for all the pains you have taken in my behalf. If I were to act otherwise than I have done, I should go contrary to my convictions of what is right.”

Mr. Faircastle grasped for a moment the hand that was offered him, but ere he released it he said, not without emotion, “ If the time should ever come when you would look back on this hour and say you acted from impulse—send for me—I am at your service. After all, wealth of character is a personal estate which is indestructible—the income is perpetual—the enjoyment endless.” And having finished this little speech, he seized his hat and rushed from the house for fear of encountering some one who would see the moisture which dimmed his eyes.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

NOT many weeks after the circumstances related in the last chapter Mrs. Beresford joyfully greeted Jasper with the news that the trouble had all blown over, and the misfortune that had threatened Avis seemed now like a fearful nightmare. Mrs. Beresford never understood the particulars of the case, and did not know how it was, but Mr. Tracey wrote that his fears had been allayed by something entirely unforeseen.

“After all, it was well that Avis had been told nothing of the abyss on which she stood. She had gone to Europe, was getting quite well again, and when she came back she would know the whole truth.”

Soon Avis was heard of as the star of American society in various European cities, and as the *éclat* attending her beauty and fascinations increased, letters in her hand-writing came less frequently to Sherwood, and at last ceased almost entirely.

Then a rumor was wafted across the ocean that Sidney Rainsford had joined the army of the Khedive, and that bit of telegraphic news appeared in every prominent paper both North and South.

Mr. Beresford lost all patience when he heard this. He conjectured that Avis had been at her old tricks. “What business had she to trifle with such a man as Sidney Rains-



ford ! The young woman should be lectured when she came again to Sherwood." Mr. Beresford would let her know "that *he* did not countenance such dissimulation !"

But while things were going on contrary to Mr. Beresford's approbation, the seasons were marching along in steady course, and spring had shaken hands with winter, and finally summer bade farewell to spring, and Sherwood was once more "vocal with the melody of birds" and fragrant with the breath of flowers.

The Beresfords usually spent a month every summer at "The Springs" in their neighborhood, and they now invited Jasper to share the cottage which they had owned there for many years.

Jasper had not decided how or where to dispose of her vacation, and as this plan was more pleasant than any that presented itself, she accepted the invitation with thanks.

As month after month passed, two persons at Sherwood watched the papers with anxiety for items in regard to the army of the Khedive.

At last, one morning, as Mr. Beresford sat at the foot of the table waiting for a second cup of coffee, he opened the mail which Dandy had just brought in.

"Nothing of importance," said Mr. Beresford, glancing at the circulars and postal cards, and taking up his newspaper. Suddenly his plate was pushed away, and his wife looked up to see her husband with one hand over his eyes.

"Dead !" he exclaimed.

"Who, my dear ?" asked Mrs. Beresford, at the same time



trying to quiet Tiny, who was asking for more sugar in her tea. "Whom did you say?"

"Sidney Rainsford! See!" exclaimed Mr. Beresford, drawing his wife's attention to a paragraph in the paper which he held. "See! died in a hospital in Alexandria, the gallant Sidney Rainsford, a Virginian and a noted officer in the Confederate army!"

There was a silence for some moments, and then Mr. Beresford, wiping his eyes, said, "I loved that man. Mrs. Beresford, if Avis Frothingham has done this, she will repent it."

"Do not be hasty, dear," said Mrs. Beresford. "We do not know all the points. Avis may not be to blame. You know the Rainsfords are peculiar."

"He was a noble man," said Mr. B., disregarding his wife's defence of Avis, and leaving his coffee untouched as he walked up and down the room.

"Miss St. John, I see that you sympathize with us in the loss of this dear friend. I read it in your countenance. The expression of your grief is a just tribute to the worth of the man—I thank you for it. When history is written and the deeds of the Southern soldier are recorded, no nobler name will go sounding down through ages than that of Sidney Rainsford."

Mrs. Beresford did not finish the muffin she had buttered, and Jasper sought the quiet of her own chamber. The children saw that something was the matter with papa, and did not claim the usual morning petting.

"The house is becoming gloomy; we *must* cheer up,"



said Mrs. Beresford some days after hearing the sad tidings of Sidney Rainsford's death. So Jasper's musical talents were called into requisition, and she was urged to sing the old Scotch songs that Mr. Beresford loved better than all others.

She did sing them until she broke down, and Mr. Mandeville, who was present, remarked that the highest compliment he could pay her as a vocalist was to say "that there were tears in her voice."

The summer holidays had come, the Virginia watering places were filling up with visitors, and Mrs. Beresford was quite impatient to get her husband away from Sherwood and into the society of some of his cheerful friends.

She felt that there was a cloud upon his brow, and how to dispel it she knew not. His first wife had been gifted with the faculty of making him forget every trouble. The present Mrs. Beresford was so young when she was married, that she now felt as if she were assuming a new *role*, and almost stepping beyond the bounds of propriety when she endeavored to amuse the elderly husband who had always petted and amused his wife as he would have done a child.

The following week, therefore, was decided upon for the departure of the family from Sherwood for a season. Jasper finished all her own arrangements, and then lent a helping hand to Mrs. Beresford, who, in endeavoring to supply a suitable quantity of aprons, sacques, hats, and dresses for the little Beresfords, felt that she had the world on her shoulders.



"The trunks are packed, but what if company should come!" exclaimed Mrs. Beresford.

"Unpack, of course, my dear. I will never turn a friend from my door as long as I have a crust of bread and a roof over my head!" responded Mr. Beresford.

The words had scarcely passed his lips when Dandy, looking down a vista of shade trees as he handed his master his pipe, made a discovery that a vehicle was approaching Sherwood.

The occupant of the coach could not be discerned in the dim twilight, and Dandy retired to relieve himself of his butler's apron ere he was summoned to the front of the house by the heavy brass knocker which each guest seemed to know well how to wield.

In the course of a few moments, bang! went the knocker three or four times; and so decided and peremptory was the call that Dandy tore off a button in trying to get rid of his superfluous article of clothing.

He was at the door in a moment, and the person whom he confronted there caused him to stand with open mouth and dilated eyes for a second or more.

"Is Jasper St. John at home?" inquired the visitor.

Dandy was trying to collect his senses, and had not yet found his tongue.

"Is Jasper here?" asked the stranger a second time, elevating his voice and thinking probably the servant was deaf.

"I think, sir, she are within, although she mought be without," responded Dandy, putting on his company manners and trying to use his best grammar.



Thee need not say *sir* to me. What is thy name?" said the gentleman at the door.

"Dan Skipper, master. Won't you walk in?"

"Thee need not call me master. In the sight of God I am Ephraim Grantland, and thee is Daniel Skipper. If thee choseth, thee may call me *friend* Grantland. Will thee be kind enough to find out if my niece Jasper is at home?"

"Yes, sir, I'll see, Mass Friend," replied Dandy, showing Ephraim Grantland into the sitting-room and going in search of Mammy to inform her that there was the most curious old gentleman in the house he ever had seen.

"My uncle here!" exclaimed Jasper with genuine delight when Callie came in with the news.

Through the long hall and down the stairs sped Jasper as quickly as her feet could carry her, and soon her arms were around Ephraim Grantland's neck, and grateful tears gushed from the eyes that had so long been dry.

"Dear, thee is the same impetuous child as ever. I bless thee, my daughter."

"You don't know all, uncle. I am learning to be quiet—but I am so glad to see you," and she kissed him again.

"Sit down, my daughter, we have little time to talk, for I must leave to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow?"

"Ay, to-morrow!"

"Why to-morrow, uncle?"

"Time is precious, and I have come for thee."

"Come for me!" Jasper's heart sank within her.

"Come for me!" she exclaimed again.



"Yes, dear."

"Why, uncle?"

"Thy aunt has been ill. I need thy help. We have no one who is competent."

"Where is Sophy?"

"She is married!"

"Sophy married!" exclaimed Jasper in astonishment. "She vowed she never would!"

"True, dear, but in matrimonial affairs a woman often does not know what she will do until she is asked."

"Sophy married?"

"Yes, dear, but it might have been worse."

"And my aunt has been ill?"

"Yes, and without her knowledge I have come South in the hope of collecting a little debt that has long been owing to me. A neighbor has promised to remain with Hester until my return, and I have come a hundred miles out of my way in the hope of taking thee back with me. Will thee go?"

Jasper hesitated. "This is sudden," she said. "I have promised to go elsewhere."

"For pleasure?"

"No, not for pleasure; for a change."

"Thee will find a very great change if thee goes with *me*, dear."

"And in the hope that I may forget——. Uncle," said Jasper, suddenly hiding her face upon his shoulder, "I have not been happy."

"That is nothing unusual, my child. Man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward."



Jasper here noticed for the first time that there were many more lines in her uncle's face than when she last parted with him.

"Uncle," said Jasper, "I know what is my duty, but it is hard to perform."

"Thee is at least honest, my child," said Ephraim Grantland, a little disappointed.

"Can I not have a little time to reflect?"

"Yes, I will not compel thee. I give thee till to-morrow morning at six o'clock," said Ephraim Grantland, looking at his watch. "Did thee say that thee had known trouble, my child?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Through much tribulation shall we enter the kingdom of heaven, Jasper."

"I know, I know," responded Jasper, "but heaven seems so far off."

"Not so far, my child, if we lift our hearts off of this earth."

"Did you say six o'clock?"

"Yes, I must be off by six to the minute. By extra pay I have induced the driver of the Fairy Belle to call here for me to-morrow morning. I suppose John Beresford will give me shelter for the night?"

"Of course. He is hospitality itself. I shall miss them, uncle, they are such dear, kind friends."

"I said I would not force thee to go contrary to thy inclination. I will promise also that thee may return here if thy aunt is restored to health."



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHEN Jasper went to her room the altered countenance of her uncle haunted her, still she could not make up her mind to go with him.

"Ah, those were bitter words my aunt spoke to me—'*Who does thee think would have thee!*'"—and Jasper sat with her face buried in her hands for some moments.

"No, I will not go," she said at length, and after undressing she put out the light and went to bed. "*I can not*" were the last words she murmured to herself, and then with the weariness that follows a mental struggle she closed her eyes in sleep.

The chamber was dark and still, and Jasper slumbered on for hours without dreaming. Suddenly she was brought face to face with a countenance of dazzling brightness. A glory filled the room. A voice seemed to cry out peremptorily, "*Go!*"

She sprang out of bed; she rubbed her eyes—the light was blinding.

"*Go!*" something seemed to say again.

"Go where?" Jasper asked herself.

All of a sudden she remembered that Ephraim Grantland had come for her and was sleeping in the adjoining room.



"*I will*," said Jasper as if answering a messenger from the spirit-world ; "*I will !*"

She was now wide awake. The moon had risen ; she saw it through the foliage of the oak tree in front of her window. It seemed to hang there like a golden apple ; it had been shining upon her pillow. This, then, was the countenance that had confronted her.

Jasper moved around the room gathering some few articles that lay scattered about ; she needed no lamp, the moonlight was everywhere. She had little packing to do ; the trunks were ready for a different journey. Lastly she took her travelling dress from the wardrobe and placed it upon a chair close at hand.

" Now I am ready," said Jasper as she let down the curtain at the window and went back to bed.

Far away in the alcove the clock struck two, and the moon, having fulfilled its mission, left the old oak tree behind and went sailing away around the world.

When Mrs. Beresford came down the next morning she was astonished at the turn matters had taken.

" Jasper to leave them ! How could she get along without her !"

The day promised to be a gloomy one. Clouds obscured the mountains and nature seemed about to burst into tears.

The last button of Jasper's travelling dress was fastened, her hat was on, and Ephraim Grantland waited for her at the foot of the stairs.

Mr. Beresford would not hear of their leaving without a hot cup of coffee, and into the dining-room they *must* go.



"I thank thee, John Beresford, but I would not have had thee trouble thyself."

Friend Grantland nevertheless partook of the hot cakes, the scrambled eggs, and delicious Mocha, and felt refreshed thereby.

Jasper had particularly requested that the children should not be roused ; the leave-taking could only be painful. So going into the nursery, she kissed each little sleeper. A tear would find its way from her cheek to Tiny's, and Jasper brushed it off hastily as she heard her uncle calling her from the hall.

"Come, dear, finish thy farewells," said he ; "we shall be late."

Thus hurried, Jasper went down, was embraced by Mrs. Beresford, while Mr. B. grasped her hand and said heartily, "God bless you, my dear young lady ; we shall look for you back some day."

Jasper's heart was full. She took the basket of lunch Dandy had prepared, said "Good-bye" to the servants, was helped into the dilapidated old coach, and the travellers drove off.

Ephraim Grantland pulled his hat over his eyes, leaned back, and tried to finish his morning's nap.

They rattled along for miles with no word to break the silence from those inside the coach. The driver's musical talent seemed to have deserted him ; he only scolded and whipped his horses. As Jasper closed her eyes and folded her arms she felt as if a pall had fallen over the earth, the last remnant of a dream had vanished. A day or two



passed; the whole journey, both by stage coach and rail, was accomplished.

"Here we are, my dear," said Ephraim Grantland as the train neared the city. "Has thee got on good stout shoes?"

Jasper said "Yes."

"It is well. We will not take a carriage."

After giving some directions about the trunks, Mr. Grantland and his niece left the train.

They walked on for some time through a strange part of the city, and finally came to a halt before an humble dwelling.

"This is our new home—we are taking lodgings," said he, and Ephraim Grantland opened the door with the latch-kef he carried in his pocket. The little room into which Jasper was admitted was destitute of comfort. There was neither carpet nor matting on the floor, no curtains at the windows, none but hard, stiff, straight-back chairs ranged against the wall.

"Dear, thee seems surprised," said her uncle. "Thee may as well know the truth at once. This little furniture is all I own. My fortune was swept away in the great money crisis that occurred a few months ago. I am only a clerk in the establishment of which I was once the head."

The door of the room adjoining now opened, and an elderly woman dressed as a Quaker came towards them.

"I am glad to see thee has gotten back safely," said she as she shook hands with Jasper and her uncle in turn.

"Yes, friend Grey, we are here all right. How is Hester?" asked Ephraim Grantland.



"Not so well as when you left ; she has had another attack ; I fear her right arm is paralyzed."

Ephraim bowed his head in his hands for a moment.

"She is asleep now, and had best not be disturbed. Jasper, thee may go softly to the little room upstairs, where thee can take off thy hat and rest for a while."

Jasper did as she was advised. Upstairs she found still further proof of the fallen fortunes of her uncle, and the untrained, awkward girl who appeared with clean towels for the traveller was a poor substitute for the neat and bustling Sophy Gregg.

Soon friend Grey came up and gave Jasper all the particulars of her aunt's illness. Mrs. Grey expressed her opinion that the attack had been brought on by trouble, and aggravated by the want of those comforts to which Mrs. Grantland had always been accustomed.

"And now, dear, my own household needs looking after, and I must go away this afternoon. I will come and help thee whenever I can, for thee is young to have such a responsibility put upon thee."

The scanty dinner was ready. There was nothing upon the table to tempt the appetite of an invalid, and Jasper noticed the pained expression upon her uncle's countenance when the plate which had been sent to Hester was returned with the food untouched.

The meal was finished in silence, and as Ephraim rose from the table he stroked fondly his niece's hair as he said, "Go to thy room, Jasper, put thy clothing in order there, and then take thy rest. I will watch by Hester for the



remainder of the day. To-morrow thee will be installed as head nurse, for then I must go back to my work. Thee knows, dear, I have lodgings to pay for now."

The atmosphere of the darkened room to which Jasper was admitted the next day was stifling. The shutters could not be opened. There was no drapery to soften the glare that poured through the windows.

Hester lay unconscious upon her pillows. She did not seem to care who ministered to her wants, and Jasper lifted her head and gave the medicine which the doctor had prescribed, though as she did so she received no token of recognition from the invalid. As days went on, however, Hester Grantland found out that there was something soothing in the touch of that soft, cool hand upon her forehead—she learned to look for it. The person who moved so noiselessly about the chamber anticipated her wants. Who could it be? Suddenly the mist that had obscured her mental faculties cleared away, and Hester Grantland knew that Jasper was her nurse.

And now, brought low through illness and trouble, Mrs. Grantland was left in solemn communion with her own thoughts. The icy draught that was offered to her parched lips was always in time. She watched in silence the arrangements made for her comfort. She saw the hand that plied so industriously the needle until a curtain was improvised to exclude the glare of the scorching sun.

Jasper, who had been well paid for her services by Mr. Beresford, had it in her power to procure for her uncle's house many conveniences which he could not possibly have



afforded. Soft mats were provided for the bare floors, and Hester Grantland gained some little appetite. She well knew that the fruit and delicate fare daily offered her were not purchased with the money in her husband's scanty purse. Jasper alone must have done it; Jasper alone obeyed Mrs. Grantland's voice in the stillness of the night; Jasper came to her bedside at the rising of the sun.

We will not attempt to analyze Hester's feelings as she lay prostrate upon that couch of illness. Suffice it to say she underwent the discipline of sorrow, her narrow-minded prejudices vanished, her whole life lay stretched before her like a map.

Sophy came to see Jasper as soon as she heard of her arrival. Sophy was "so glad somebody had come to take care of the old folks. It did seem out of the question for them to be left there without kith or kin. As for Mr. Abel, it would have been better if he had never been born, he had turned out so badly." This was the first time Jasper had heard Abel's name called; she felt a hesitancy in asking after him. She was almost sure from her uncle's silence in regard to him that something disagreeable had happened.

"Yes," continued Sophy, "you know Mr. Abel with all his fine education didn't *believe*—no, he didn't believe; and after his father's money all went, why you wouldn't have known the young man. Weeks went by sometimes and nobody knew where he was. The truth is, he got into bad habits, and the next thing we heard of him was that he had gone to California."

Sophy gave Jasper news also of some of her old compan-



ions. Most of them were out of the city for the summer. The Reinbergs had gone to Germany on a visit, Dr. Beckwith was dead, and Miss Harrison was now Principal of the Academy, and Sophy wound up by saying she had just come over to bring a little jelly to Mrs. Grantland, which she hoped she would enjoy. Sophy had known well how to tempt the appetite of her mistress, and she proved on this occasion that her hand had not forgotten its cunning. And when she said good-bye to Jasper, she promised to come often and help the girl in the kitchen, and to sit up at night whenever Miss St. John wanted her.

Under Jasper's administration the dreary-looking apartments in which her uncle lived assumed a more cheerful aspect. Friend Grey said that Jasper was a blessing, but what said Hester? *Nothing!*

And now the physician gave permission to the invalid to sit up; but her bones ached, and Hester looked at the hard, straight-back chairs and shook her head; it would not do. Oh! if she might only once more be at the window and breathe the fresh cool morning air. Alas! it could not be. She must lie upon her bed all through the long, long, weary day. She dreamed sometimes that she was young, that she could go where she pleased, that no one could restrain her, then woke to find herself almost suffocated in the narrow bed and close apartment. But one morning, in the first rosy blush of the day, Hester descried what she had so much coveted—*an invalid's chair!* Right by the window it stood; its soft, wide arms seemed to be stretched out to her; they invited her to "come!" Hester knew whose bounty had sup-



plied that comfort, and as Jasper bent over her and arranged her pillows, the spirit of the living God entered the invalid's heart, and she whispered, "*Kiss me, Jasper.*"

Poor, wretched, helpless—what a wreck was Hester Grantland! God had taken his own time and his own way to do his work. Jasper leaned over and kissed her aunt.

"Now if thee can help me," said Hester, "it may be that I can sit at the window. I long to look elsewhere than at this dingy wall. Alas! I am too heavy for thee," and Hester fell back upon her pillows.

But, according to Jasper's request, Sophy was within call, and the two succeeded in getting Mrs. Grantland out of the bed and into the new chair; and now, for the first time for many weeks, she looked out upon the street, saw the busy crowd hurrying along, felt that she too yet lived and was cared for.

Soon Sophy brought the tempting tea, which, to suit Mrs. Grantland's taste, must not stand a moment too long upon the leaves; the toast was just right; a bunch of flowers was upon the waiter. Jasper, seeing that all was as it should be, made ready to leave the room.

"Come back, Jasper," said her aunt in the old peremptory tone. "Sophy, thee can go."

Jasper stood by Hester's chair.

"*I wronged thee once; it cannot be undone; thee must forget it, though;*" and Mrs. Grantland having waved her hand in token that she had nothing more to say, Jasper went out, while her aunt with closed eyes said the silent grace over the breakfast her niece had prepared.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

AT first Jasper yearned for the Southern home she had left. She missed the happy voices of the children, she missed the warm hearts she had won for herself, but as time went on and she saw how necessary she was to her aunt, and especially when her uncle laid his hand upon his niece's head and called her his "sunshine," Jasper was glad that she had not disregarded the voice of conscience which called to her so suddenly in the night.

Jasper saw that the wound which Abel had inflicted upon his father's heart was too sore ever to be healed. There was a deep-seated sorrow under his quiet air of resignation, a far-away look out of the failing eyes, and a weariness about the formerly elastic step. Hester was gradually recovering the use of her limbs, and the doctor said, "with her fine constitution she might last many years, although she never would be strong again."

A serious difficulty presented itself to Jasper at this time. Her little stock of money was almost gone. The question uppermost in her mind was how she should replenish her scanty purse. Mrs. Beresford was again at home, and wrote that the children needed their teacher sadly. She hoped Miss St. John had not made any other engagement. Jasper pondered the matter in her own mind. Those two



old people were too dependent to be left alone ; it was out of the question. No, she could not return to Sherwood ; she might as well write and tell Mrs. B. so at once. Friend Grey came in often and brought her knitting, and at such times insisted that Jasper should go out for a breath of fresh air. It was not likely that so prominent a person in the society of *Friends* as Mrs. Grantland was would be allowed to suffer for anything that it was in the power of that benevolent body to provide. As soon as it was known how reduced were the circumstances of the Grantlands, there was many a kind act performed for them. The greatest trouble, however, Jasper alone had alleviated. In Hester Grantland's childish old age the words of Ephraim came back to her in full force. He had said, " Jasper may be a comfort to thee some day." Jasper had proved all that her uncle had said she would be. Jasper's hand put the room to rights, Jasper's hand smoothed the pillows, Jasper's money had been spent right and left. But now that money was gone. Jasper had hoped to get a situation in Miss Harrison's school, but that lady's corps of teachers was made up before Jasper's return North, consequently she could look for no employment from that quarter. Jasper foresaw how much her little supply of money would be missed, yet what could she do ? If she went away, her services would be quite as great a loss. In this quandary she resolved to state the true condition of affairs to her uncle on the following day, and allow him to decide between a choice of evils. Alas ! the morrow never dawned for Ephraim Grantland ! During his wife's illness he had taken the little room at the head of the stairs for his



chamber in order that he might not disturb Hester by his early rising.

"My uncle is later than usual," said Jasper as she carried her aunt's breakfast to her.

"I am glad of it—do not disturb him," said Mrs. Grantland. "He has been working hard; a quarter's rent is due for our lodgings, and he has to raise the money." So Jasper kept the coffee hot, and even abstracted a portion of her aunt's breakfast for her uncle. Still he did not come. Eight o'clock struck, yet Ephraim Grantland did not stir. Nine came and went, and still the sleeper was in his bed. At last, when the great town-clock rang out the hour of ten, Hester said, "Thee may as well waken thy uncle, Jasper; he has enjoyed enough slumber now, and should have his breakfast."

Jasper went to his door. She tapped softly at first, then louder. "Uncle! uncle!" she said. Still no response. "Uncle, it is time to be up; the clock has struck ten." Ephraim Grantland said nothing. Jasper knocked louder. "Uncle, your breakfast is waiting." Still no voice replied. "Your business awaits you, uncle; what will your employer say?" This appeal, like the others, was unavailing. Then Jasper opened the door. She went softly to the bed. A heavenly smile was on the sleeper's lips, the semblance of youth was in every lineament.

"Uncle!" said Jasper, leaning over him and copying the phraseology of the Quakers, "thee is lazy; thee will lose thy place; wake up, dear." She stooped still lower and kissed him. His brow was cold—so cold! "Uncle, wake



up !” Still no response. “ Uncle, thee will lose thy place—indeed thee will !” But still that placid smile lingered upon those silent lips. What cared the sleeper if he did lose his place ?—he had gone where lodgings were free. Yes, Ephraim Grantland was dead !

When Jasper learned this, God seemed to have forsaken her. She fell upon her knees, and a cry of anguish she could not stifle burst from her lips. It rang through the house, and Sophy, who had just come in, ran upstairs to see what was the matter.

There lay Ephraim Grantland in the majesty of death, but his spirit had gone into the presence of its Maker. And as it lay its burden down at the feet of the Saviour, a smile so heavenly broke upon the lips of the mortal body that those who saw it exclaimed, “ Weep not for the dead, but for the living, for he is at rest, and we in tears !”

The funeral was over, and sympathizing friends discoursed to each other in smothered tones on the uncertainty of life. “ Who would have supposed that Hester Grantland would have outlived her husband ? yet there she was, helpless and bereaved, while he had gone to that rest which remaineth for the people of God.”

What could be done for the desolate woman ? That must be the question now. At last one of those angels of mercy whom God allows to dwell for a season in our midst came forward and said :

“ Though not rich, I have more of this world’s goods than I deserve. I would be glad to have Friend Grantland live with me.” So the matter was mentioned to Hester,



and she sanctioned every arrangement with the gentleness and submission of a child. Yes, she thanked her friends; she would go wherever they thought best.

Jasper was now free to rejoin her Southern friends, and she was not slow in writing to Mr. Beresford the day and hour she might be expected at Chatsworth.

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### CHAPTER XXX.

ONCE more the train sped through the lovely valley, and Jasper was one of those who helped to make up the freight of human beings travelling to the southward.

At last all the distance was accomplished with the exception of a few miles, and now once more the Fairy Belle went rattling and dashing over the stones in the principal street of the village of Chatsworth. The driver pulled up his horses before a house for the accommodation of travellers, and as Jasper descended from the high-swung vehicle in which she had been confined, her eye fell upon the Sherwood carriage. Children seemed to be pouring out of the windows. Mammy sat supreme in power in the midst of the active little throng, who, as soon as they saw Jasper, cried out at the top of their voices, "Miss St. John has come! There she is!"

Once more Jasper feels Tiny's arms tighten around her neck, and the heart that has been starved for love goes out



to those little children, and Pink, who is more shy than the rest, whispers :

“ Mamma would have come too, but she was not well,” while Rob tries to look indifferent, but rubs his eyes with a corner of his sleeve, and after awhile informs Jasper he has a new rabbit-trap, which he will show her as soon as he gets home ; but the greatest piece of news of all they had to tell was that Cousin Avis was coming back to Sherwood.

Just then Mr. Beresford rode into the village. He thought he had timed himself to the minute, but he was a little too late. As he approached Jasper he looked like some “ potent, grave, and worthy seigneur,” for he wore his long white beard outside of his coat, and usually his barb was not visible. When the Civil War first broke out such had been that worthy gentleman’s confidence in the success of the Southern cause that he had vowed never to shave until the Confederacy had achieved her independence. Alas ! that beard was in a fair way to resemble Aaron’s, which reached to the hem of his garments ; but Mr. B. was true to his word. “ Never *had* shaved—never *would* ;” so his beard being of an inconvenient length, he generally tucked it inside of his vest, which he wore fastened nearly to the throat.

He gave Jasper a hearty welcome, and soon the whole party set out for Sherwood. Arriving there, they found Mrs. Beresford at the door ready to meet them. When she caught sight of the sable-clad figure which sprang from the carriage, she gave Jasper an embrace which seemed more like that of a younger sister than of a stranger.



Avis *was* coming. No letter had been received—only a telegram ; the news was entirely unexpected.

Jasper was reinstated in her old room, and felt as much at home as ever, but the children claimed a week more of holiday, and Mrs. Beresford was in favor of their being indulged. Her true reason, however, for sanctioning this was that Jasper, who had been so confined all summer, might enjoy a little respite.

Once more in that old Virginia homestead a spirit which had been tossed about by fears within and foes without enjoyed repose. No wonder that word “repose” is associated with greatness and goodness—ay, with God himself. Jasper enjoyed a repose of the soul, because her thoughts did not condemn her acts. She slept all through the night, moon or no moon, storm or no storm—indeed, so heavily did she slumber that Mammy opened the door one morning and was shocked to find her still in bed. Breakfast was ready, and, said Mammy as she peered through the half open door, “*She’s come.*”

“Who,” asked Jasper, a little bewildered at first.

“Miss Avis ! Mr. Tracey came with her—got here after everybody had gone to bed—took a private carriage from Oakwood—oh ! it’s a mighty, monsous pity !”

“What ?” asked Jasper, now fairly out of bed.

“Hurry, child, there’s the first bell ; I must go ; the children will be making a noise,” and Mammy left Jasper’s room as unceremoniously as she had entered it.

When Jasper had dressed herself and gone downstairs, she met Mrs. Beresford in the hall.



"Avis must not see any one to-day," whispered Mrs. B. "She looks wretchedly. My father had no idea that the journey would prove so trying. Avis was so bent upon coming South that nothing else would satisfy her. She asked the first thing if you were at Sherwood, and when I told her yes she said she had felt sure of it; she would not wait to write——" and here Mrs. Beresford was called off without finishing all she had to say. A day passed before any one was allowed to see Avis. The physician from Chatsworth came out, and looked much more serious when he went away than when he arrived.

At last the children were rejoiced by the news that aunt Avis was ready for them. They crept into her chamber like mice, and soon came out with the beautiful things Avis had bought them in Europe. Next Jasper was wanted, and as she opened the door she saw Avis lying back upon her pillows looking whiter than the embroidered cashmere wrapper that enveloped her delicate form.

Jasper drew near the bed, and Avis put out one thin, hot hand by way of welcome.

"Darling," said she, "I have wanted to see you so long. Ever since——" Avis coughed violently, and had to wait some time before she could finish what she had to say.

"I have come back to die."

Jasper smoothed caressingly the small hand she held in her own.

"Yes, to die. I am so young; it seems hard, does it not? But, Jasper, life is such a cheat—we never have just what we want, do we?"



“No, dear Avis.”

“Never just what we want, so I am looking to that land to which I am hastening without a regret. Yes,” continued Avis, “all hearts were mine but *one*; I was denied that boon which was worth all the rest.”

Here there was another painful pause.

“Jasper, I could not enter the pearly gates if I did not make a clean breast of it. That one heart worth all the rest *was not mine*. At first I coveted the glory of proving that I could win it, but in the effort I made to rivet the chains which would bind it to myself I lost my own heart irretrievably. Yes, I loved Sidney Rainsford, but I found out—alas! too late!—that he only looked on Avis Frothingham as the butterfly of fashion for whom he cherished a kind interest on account of her frailty, and that his truly noble heart was given to another. Who that other was I was not long in discovering. He gave me his confidence, and I in return gave him no encouragement. Circumstances aided me in this. I said little, but I did the mischief, and he saw the letters which came to the object of his attachment—he *witnessed the meeting between her and her supposed lover*. I felt sure that all would soon be forgotten in foreign travel and in the wealth of affection I cherished for him, which only awaited his asking. But no—at home or abroad, on sea or on land—his heart ever turned to the one noble, splendid woman he had left behind. That woman was Jasper St. John!”

Jasper's tears fell one by one upon the hand she held fast in her own.



"You are weeping ; my own eyes are dry," said Avis. "I could not shed a tear, not even when Sidney bade me good-bye for the last time—no, not even when I heard that he was dead. Do not think me a wretch, Jasper. If I had been more callous, what was commenced for pastime would not have ended in grief, and I should have come out of this unscathed. But draw nearer and lay your hand upon my forehead, and remember, darling, that *I loved him*."

"Perhaps it is not unwomanly to say so, for I have seen his grave in that far-off, down-trodden land. I could not rest until I went there. Yes, I read the name of Sidney Rainsford upon the head-board which marked his last resting-place, and oh! Jasper! I could tear out this wretched heart of mine and throw it away from me. There—in the loneliness of my own sorrow—I realized the wrong I had done both you and him. Back to Rome and then to the gay capital of France I went, but life had lost its zest. Avis Frothingham was changed !

"There was but one slight reparation I could make ; you were poor, I rich. I felt that my days were numbered. I would bequeath all I possessed on earth to you, and papers were drawn up to that effect while I was abroad.

"Alas ! even this consolation was denied me. On reaching New York, what was my astonishment to discover that while I was plotting against your happiness you were making a noble sacrifice to secure mine, and the fortune I wished to bestow was already your own. Jasper, I know your heart's story by the tremor of your hand and the convulsive sob you are striving in vain to stifle. I do not



ask you to forgive me ; you can but pity and pardon one who has been brought so low. But, darling——.” Avis was overcome with fatigue and emotion, and turned her face to the wall until her voice came back to her.

“ Darling, there is a bond of sympathy between us—we both loved him ! Seal this bond—kiss me, Jasper.”

The parched lips of Avis were pressed in silence.

“ Jasper, a load is lifted off my heart ; I look back upon the past as upon a fitful dream ; now

‘ My soul to his soul I wed—  
Thine the living, but mine the dead. ’ ”

Jasper still chafed the transparent hand, and raised it to her lips more than once in token of love and forgiveness.

Presently Avis roused up again.

“ Jasper,” said she, “ I want to be buried in the family burying-ground at Sherwood—see to it. You will come sometimes and put flowers on my grave, will you not ? ”

“ Oh don’t—don’t talk so, dear Avis.”

“ I must, Jasper ; I may not be strong enough after a while.

“ And I want you to see that a white marble shaft—a broken one—marks the spot where I rest ; will you ? ”

Jasper pressed the hand she held in token of assent. Her voice was choked with grief. She could say nothing.

“ Yes, tell them to place over my grave a broken shaft, with a white lily falling from its stem. Put nothing on the pedestal but the name of *Avis*.

“ That is all I can say now,” and Avis again turned her



face to the wall, and Jasper discovered by her breathing that she was asleep.

Presently the invalid roused up.

"I will not take any more of these opiates, Jasper ; I shall never finish all that I wish to say. Now, while I am wide awake, take this key, open that case of jewelry."

Jasper did as she was requested.

"You know, dear," said Avis, "all that I have is yours, but these few little keepsakes I must leave to those who have loved me in spite of all my faults.

"This set of pearls was my mother's ; it must be kept for Bessie. These emeralds are for Pink, the coral for Tiny, the diamonds and all the rest for my elder sister, Mrs. Beresford. Take them away ; I am so tired—so tired !

"Don't leave me, darling ; I won't be here long. I want to die in your arms, may I ?"

"Oh ! Avis !" cried Jasper, "I cannot give you up. I never knew your worth until now," and Jasper fell upon her knees and gave vent to the pent-up anguish of her soul.

Avis grew rapidly worse. In the course of a few weeks the struggle was over. The tired one rested, and all that remained of her fragile beauty was straightened for the grave. Mr. Beresford learned enough of the state of the case to become convinced that he had done Avis injustice, and when the last clod of earth fell upon her coffin he broke down entirely and wept like a child.

Although the ample fortune to which Jasper had become heir removed all necessity for occupation, she once more



sought consolation and forgetfulness in the hum-drum life of the governess.

Mrs. Grantland was often the recipient of her bounty, and even Abel, who had become poor and needy, received sums of money without knowing whence they came.

All at once the necessity for contributing to his wants ceased. Friend Grey wrote that he had left California. He had prostituted his talents to the writing of infidel articles for a second class paper in San Francisco, had gotten into a difficulty with an editor, and had finally disappeared altogether.

Soon another year went by, and Mr. Faircastle again made his appearance at Sherwood, and even Mrs. Beresford, who was inclined to let the world go along in its own way, felt assured that his attentions were serious.

Jasper wished to atone for what she knew he considered her foolishness—wished to consult him as her lawyer and place her affairs in his hands. And now an intimacy sprang up between Jasper and the Faircastles in Richmond, and she was invited to visit her father's old friends during the holidays. She always made Sherwood her headquarters, however, and came back after months of travel to the welcome that was sure to be ready for her.

In the course of a year or two little Bertha Reinberg, who had grown to be an accomplished woman, was installed as governess of the Sherwood children. This was done through Jasper's influence and recommendation. It was a fortunate circumstance that so pleasant a home had been secured for Bertha. Her father had died suddenly—some said from



the effect of a discord perpetrated by one of his pupils during her execution of an overture composed by Wagner. Be that true or not, the professor left a record of his faithfulness in the accomplished musicians he furnished to the world, and there are many living who possess all of his faults but none of his virtues. Foremost among those who shone in the world of song as pupils of the worthy professor was Jasper St. John.

She soon became the favored guest of every throng. Young, gifted, attractive, and rich, she was sought by many, but she ever gave the same answer to every suitor, till at last it was publicly announced by some one intimate enough with her to give the semblance of truth to the assertion that Jasper St. John would never marry.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

GOLD ! what a magic is in the word ! How naturally do most persons make the precious metal their standard of all excellence ! We read of golden hair, golden dreams, golden clouds, golden sunbeams, and golden opinions. How many are toiling for gold in various parts of the world—some in the natural cradles of the rivers, some in the auriferous rock where the primeval breakers, waves, and currents have disseminated it in veins which yield their treasures only to those who drop their sweat at the shrine of lucre ! But not



only in the mines and beds of rivers of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America is man delving and dying for gold. No matter what the employment, indoors or out, at home or abroad, the precious metal is the goal for which we strive. Gold man will aim for, gold he must have, though in the struggle to obtain it he loses the golden opportunity of passing through the golden gate which he imagines stands at the entrance of Paradise.

Solomon has said that the love of money is the root of all evil ; but a modern worshipper at the shrine of the golden calf has decided that the *want* of money is the root of all evil.

An appreciation of the yellow dust, however, is not confined to those of the present day. Gold is often mentioned by Job. His friend Eliphaz advised him to return to God, for then would he lay up gold of Ophir as stones of the brooks. The ark, too, was covered with gold, and during the reign of Solomon the ships brought gold from Ophir, and the king sat upon a throne of ivory and gold, and all his drinking vessels were of gold.

It is not astonishing, then, that men less wise than Solomon left home, friends, and all that was most dear when the cry of "gold !" was raised in California. Then burst upon the world, too, the wonders of a land almost unknown before. We heard of its immense trees, its vast cañons, its awful cataracts, and those who possessed not the greed for gold longed to see those wonders of nature.

A lonely man was wandering in the valley of the Yosemite. Perhaps he was tired of watching the grapple for



gold. He seemed to love most to commune with the solemn skies, and to scale the heights that hung above ravines where foot of man had never trod. Ever on the lookout for adventure among the vast cañons of the West, no spot was left unexplored. Wild and desert places were the delight of this ever-roving, ever-restless spirit, and then, when all that was grand and beautiful in nature had been seen, and there was nothing else to tempt the traveller to risk life and limb where never guide had set foot, the weary man turned elsewhere for amusement.

There were yet portions of the American continent which he had not visited; he would start once more upon his travels. This time the place of his destination was the gay and populous city of New Orleans.

Just then an enemy more potent than any which man has ever had to contend with was making its way to the devoted city. It started from Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico. At first the inhabitants of New Orleans laughed at the approach of their old foe—"Yellow Jack," as they called him—but he never entirely deserted them during the summer; there were always a few cases of the disease in obscure streets and unclean alleys; there was no probability of the fever's becoming infectious. Those who argued thus were mistaken.

There was daily a fearful increase in mortality. A horror seized each inhabitant of the infected city, then there was a general stampede. To describe the scenes that attended the scourge of the yellow fever is beyond the power of mortal man. So malignant was the plague, so many were the patients, that there was a dearth of physicians, medicines, and nurses.



One could almost see the infection in the air, and imagine that it was awaiting an opportunity to strike down its victim ; one not only smelt the plague but he tasted it.

The disease produced different effects upon different persons. Some were delirious, requiring two or three persons to hold them in bed ; others fell into a stupor and were never aroused again. Many died in twenty-four hours after being taken, while some lingered for days. The situation grew hourly worse. Each day there were fresh horrors to record, and many died without attention. The well ones were quickly counted, and morning after morning that little band grew smaller. It seemed that the pestilence would not yield to medicine ; everything depended upon nursing.

There were a few noble men who stood firm throughout the raging plague, and determined to battle with the scourge. They volunteered their services, which were thankfully accepted.

Among those volunteer nurses was the stranger who had tired of his wanderings through the wild cañons of the West. This man was everywhere—now at the side of some lowly personage he administered medicine or gave a word of hope, again by the bed of some wealthier patient he received the last messages for absent friends in case the victim of the scourge was claimed by death. So efficient was this stranger, so cool did he appear under the most trying difficulties, that he won for himself the sobriquet of “The Doctor.” A patient who had been suddenly stricken with the plague turned restlessly from side to side upon his narrow bed. He was looking anxiously for some one. At last his



eye lighted up with a gleam of satisfaction, and he exclaimed :  
“ Ah, you have come, have you ? But they tell me you are no doctor after all—only one of those persons willing to risk life and fortune in behalf of the scourged ; is that true ? ”

“ It is. ”

“ Well, you are a brave man, and the world is not so bad as I thought it was. They tell me you are a stranger in the city. ”

“ That is true. ”

“ No one knows whence you came or whither you are going ? ”

“ True also. I will tell you whence I came, however. I left California on the 20th of August. Whither I am going I don't know myself. The cry of the suffering human beings around me for help has caused me to delay indefinitely my departure from this plague-stricken community. ”

“ And you came from California ? ” said the patient. “ I too only left the gold region a few months ago. I staked my all and lost ! Ah, this is a sad, sad world ! ”

“ Can I do anything for you ? ” asked the Doctor, wishing to turn the conversation.

“ Yes, the fever is upon me. Promise me that if my case becomes hopeless you will let me know. I have last words for one at home. I can trust you ? ”

“ You can. ”

“ I thought so. I see you are every inch a man. Water, ” cried the man. “ Oh, this burning, raging fever ! give me water ! ”

The cup was held to the sick man's lips by the attendant,



and the patient, somewhat relieved, lay down quietly and closed his eyes.

Thus from one scene of suffering to another the Doctor went, and many were the cries for help that greeted him, many the blessings bestowed by those to whom he gave relief. At last his assistance was called for in vain ; he too fell a victim to the infection. The fever raged through his system, and after he was attacked with vomito even the most hopeful said that all was over, as that symptom was the sure signal of approaching dissolution.

But the Doctor did not die. His wonderful constitution carried him through, and once again restored to health, he commenced his rounds among those who had not been so fortunate.

His first thought was to go in search of the patient to whom he had made the promise that he should be told the truth if his days were numbered. The Doctor approached the man with concern.

“ What, ill yet ? You should have been out ten days ago.”

“ I know it, sir,” replied the man, gloomily, “ but I have had a relapse. They tell me *that* is certain death.”

“ It is serious, to be sure,” responded the Doctor, “ but as long as there is life there is hope.”

“ There is no hope for *me* ; something tells me I shall not recover. Do you remember my last conversation with you ?”

“ Perfectly.”

“ You will execute my last commission ?”

“ Faithfully.”

“ I thank you,” said the man, putting out his wasted hand



to be clasped by the Doctor's. "Now give me that portfolio ; the key is already in it. Thanks."

"These," said the patient, taking one package of letters from the rest, "I wish burnt—they are from a woman. I loved her—it is the old, old story—my love was not requited. Every line here written consists of kind and pitying words—earnest entreaties that I would return to a life of rectitude and honor. Had I obeyed her voice I had not been dying in this Southern clime with the pestilence that walketh in darkness. I wish her to know that I treasured her admonitions, although it was too late to heed them. I was not worthy of her, and yet I could not give her up. Her face came pleading silently and eloquently between me and all the wrong I ever did. Perhaps *you* may know her some day. To know her is to love her ; to love her—aye, be warned—is to feel that there is no other woman to whom your soul can link itself. This is her name and address," said the sick man, handing the attendant a card. "You will see that she hears all I tell you?"

"I promise."

"And now," continued the patient, "I can not recover. I am, as it were, a dead man ; you may as well leave me ; your duty is to the living."

"Courage, my dear fellow" responded the Doctor. "As for leaving you, I shall do no such thing. I am something of an invalid myself, and shall confine my attentions to one or two persons ; among those few you shall come first."

The patient looked up with a smile of gratitude. "God bless you," he said, fervently. "It was horrible to think



that I might die like a dog with no one to care. Now I am ready," and the man stretched himself out, resolved to meet his fate fearlessly.

Presently he lifted his head again from the pillow and said, "Doctor, tell her that the *scoffer* now believes that *it was the prayer of a woman* which sent some one to his bedside, else why should he be cared for while many are deserted by their best friends? Yes, it was *her* prayer—*Jasper's*. Tell her *I was ready*."

The weather was hot and sultry. The pitiless skies poured down rain, which only increased the plague. After each shower an almost tropical sun came out more scorching than before.

The man who had experienced a relapse did not recover. All the Doctor's skill and nursing could not ward off the enemy. The patient now tore the sheets in strips; he raved, he vowed vengeance on those who held him prisoner. It required all the strength the Doctor could command to hold that man upon his bed; but the struggle was short. The pestilence soon ran its course, and ere long death put an end to the agony of the victim.

True to his word, the Doctor remained with him to the last, performed the last sad offices for the dead man, and finally saw that he was decently buried. The grave was marked with the name of *Abel Grantland*.

The infection was checked for the want of material. New Orleans was almost depopulated. And now the morning air became more crisp, and those who had fled in terror from the plague-stricken city watched for the approach of



frost as a harbinger of safety. At last the dew grew white, and when first its frozen crystals glistened on tree and plant, children scraped the particles from off the leaves into their hands and kissed the blessed frost ; men and women fell upon their knees and thanked God for *frost*. Everywhere the cry arose, "we are saved—we are saved !"

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

THE marble shaft was in its place, the white lily drooped from its stem, the name of *Avis* was on the pedestal. Jasper frequently walked to the grave-yard, and the flowers were not forgotten.

On the present occasion she lingered in twilight air. Mammy and the children were sitting at the foot of the hill. Mammy was getting old, and did not care about climbing to the top—she would keep the children until Jasper came back.

The gate was open, and Jasper passed through. She stood beside the grave of *Avis*. Away off in the blue the clouds seemed sailing away with the moon, and the silvery sky formed a tranquil background to the figure now clad in mourning.

All around was still. Suddenly was heard the rustle of autumn leaves ; something came near ; it was Sultan, Sidney Rainford's dog. As he sprang towards her, a superstitious



feeling took possession of Jasper, for now the animal fawned at her feet, then ran about the grave-yard sniffing the air mysteriously. During Sidney Rainsford's lifetime Sultan had been his shadow. When the master sold Maplewood the dog was left in the care of a faithful servant, who treated him kindly. Notwithstanding this, Sultan could never be induced to follow his new owner, and the deserted friend of Sidney Rainsford seemed determined to dream away the rest of his life in the sunshine before the cottage-door. Jasper had often heard the conduct of the animal commented upon. To encounter Sultan at such a time and such a place was enough to make any one a little nervous, but before the visitor at the grave of Avis Frothingham had recovered from her surprise the dog was over the wall and away off in the woods again.

It was getting late. Jasper once fairly out of the grave-yard, retraced her steps, increasing her pace at the same time, and ere long rejoined the children, who were waiting with Mammy at the foot of the hill. All were soon at Sherwood again, but Mr. and Mrs. Beresford had not yet returned from Chatsworth, whither they had gone to bid farewell to an old friend who was on the eve of moving into a new neighborhood.

The children were tired and sleepy, and after having their tea were hurried off to the nursery by Mammy. Bertha Reinberg was in her own room writing letters, and Jasper determined to beguile the moments with music until Mrs. Beresford's return. Sultan had wakened a crowd of memories. The piano was already open, and as Jasper's hands



wandered over the keys, again "*The Prayer of the South*" seemed to flow involuntarily from the tips of her fingers. There was no lamp, no light of any kind was near, except that of the moon, which photographed upon the polished floor the oak leaves that were dancing in the breeze.

Suddenly the musician was thrilled—she paused—Sultan was beside her—his paws were in her lap. Jasper was not superstitious, but now a cold stream seemed curdling in her veins, and then her heart almost stopped beating. Awed into the impression that there was a *soul* besides her own in that room, it was a moment or two before she recovered herself. When she did so she laid her hand caressingly upon the dog's head and said, "Poor Sultan! Down, down, my good fellow!"

The animal obeyed, but as he did so gave a cry of joy and leaped into the middle of the room. At the same time a figure emerged from shadow—it was that of a man!

The musician left her seat at the instrument. She discerned the intruder. It was no spectre; it *was* a man. Bronzed and somewhat careworn, but still the same—the *living* man—*Sidney Rainsford*!

As Jasper fell almost senseless into his arms, he needed not the aid of language to tell him what he had never known till then—that she loved him.

Yes, "hand to hand and soul to soul" those two had met at last, never to be parted again on this side of eternity. At first their lips were silent, but language was superfluous. They knew each other now, and over the reunion of those



once divided hearts we draw a veil, the fulness of a joy which can never be described.

Mr. Beresford was just as much astonished as if old Colonel Beresford of the Revolutionary War had arrived, and Mammy declared it was equal to an "insurrection of the dead."

The story of Sidney Rainsford's death might well have been credited. He had been taken to a hospital with camp-fever, where he lingered for some time too ill for service.

After partially recovering he was again disabled from the effects of an old wound received during the war between North and South.

Pronounced unfit for service, he resigned his position in the army of the Khedive, and determined to travel in the East.

His camp furniture, clothing, and soldier's accoutrements were bequeathed to a comrade who lay ill in the same ward which Sidney had occupied.

In the meantime the persons in charge of the hospital—surgeons and all—were relieved, and others were appointed to the trust. The comrade whom Sidney Rainsford left ill died and was buried. Everything this man possessed bore the name of the donor. Even the linen in which the dead body was shrouded was marked with the name of Sidney Rainsford.

The fame of that gallant soldier had not extended so far as Egypt, and there were none to contradict the story of his death. Consequently Avis had actually seen what purported to be his grave, and had read his name upon the head-



board. The real Sidney knew nothing of this. Having visited every place of repute in Asia and Africa, again he was on the sea, this time bound for California. He it was who astonished the guides by scaling vast heights where no other man had ever trod. Putting out for New Orleans, he it was who headed the band of noble men who risked their lives for their fellow-creatures—yes, it was Sidney Rainsford who had won for himself the title of “The Doctor,” had watched beside Abel Grantland till he died, had seen him decently interred, and now had he come to fulfil that last promise, and to deliver the message of the “penitent” to Jasper St. John.

Having arrived at Chatsworth, Sidney secured a horse and set out for Sherwood. As he approached that portion of the estate occupied by the Beresford burying-ground, the white marble shaft attracted his eye. A cottage was situated near the boundary line which divided the estates of Maplewood and Sherwood. In this cottage lived the negro in whose charge the dog had been left. Sidney stopped to ask some question of the man who had formerly been his slave, but before the stranger had made himself known Sultan recognized in him his long-lost friend, and made wild and frantic efforts to leap nearer to his old master. When Sidney turned his horse into the bridle-path which led in the direction of the marble shaft, Sultan, who accompanied him, seemed to know his intention by instinct. The dog was in the grave-yard long before his master, and Sultan it was that had, by his unexpected appearance and singular capers, caused Jasper to hurry homeward.



In course of time Mr. Beresford's eyes were opened to the situation of affairs. He wondered that he should ever have been so obtuse as to suppose Jasper would marry his old bachelor friend Mr. Faircastle.

Mr. Beresford saw it all now. Matches *were* made in heaven. Were not Jasper and Sidney cut out for each other?

Yet the old gentleman was astonished. Nothing, said he, had surprised him more, unless it was the news that young Mandeville was to be married and would soon bring his bride home.

"His bride!" exclaimed Mrs. Beresford. "I thought Mr. Mandeville had not yet recovered from the death of Avis."

"Ah, my dear," responded Mr. Beresford with a sigh, "men have died and worms have eaten them. but not for love. It is perhaps well that it *is* so. If all the men who loved poor Avis had remained bachelors——"

Mrs. Beresford shook her head reproachfully at her husband, and he was silent. At length the lady said, "Tell us who it is that is going to marry our young friend Mr. Mandeville?"

"Miss Lee—Kate Lee, of Marlborough."

"Kate Lee!" exclaimed Bertha Reinberg in the exuberance of her joy. "Jasper, we shall be too happy; the bride is our own dear Katie! Isn't it wonderful that we shall all be together again—away off here in Virginia too!"

The person who had purchased Maplewood had tired of the novelty and returned to England. The place was for sale, and Sidney Rainsford again became the owner. There



were grand preparations going on at the old homestead, and the truth came out at last that the heir was going to take to himself a wife. Mr. Beresford declared that the wedding should be at Sherwood. Moreover, he would not consent to the mournful morning ceremony of the present day. Sherwood should have a *real* wedding. The grounds should be illuminated, and everybody invited—in fact, the affair should be a grand jubilee over the return of Sidney Rainsford to Virginia.

Oh ! that the old State had a few more like that gallant son to steer her clear of the breakers, for Virginia *was not dead* ; she would yet hold up her head, and as long as there was breath in his body Mr. Beresford would cry,

“ *Hurrah for the Old Dominion !* ”








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
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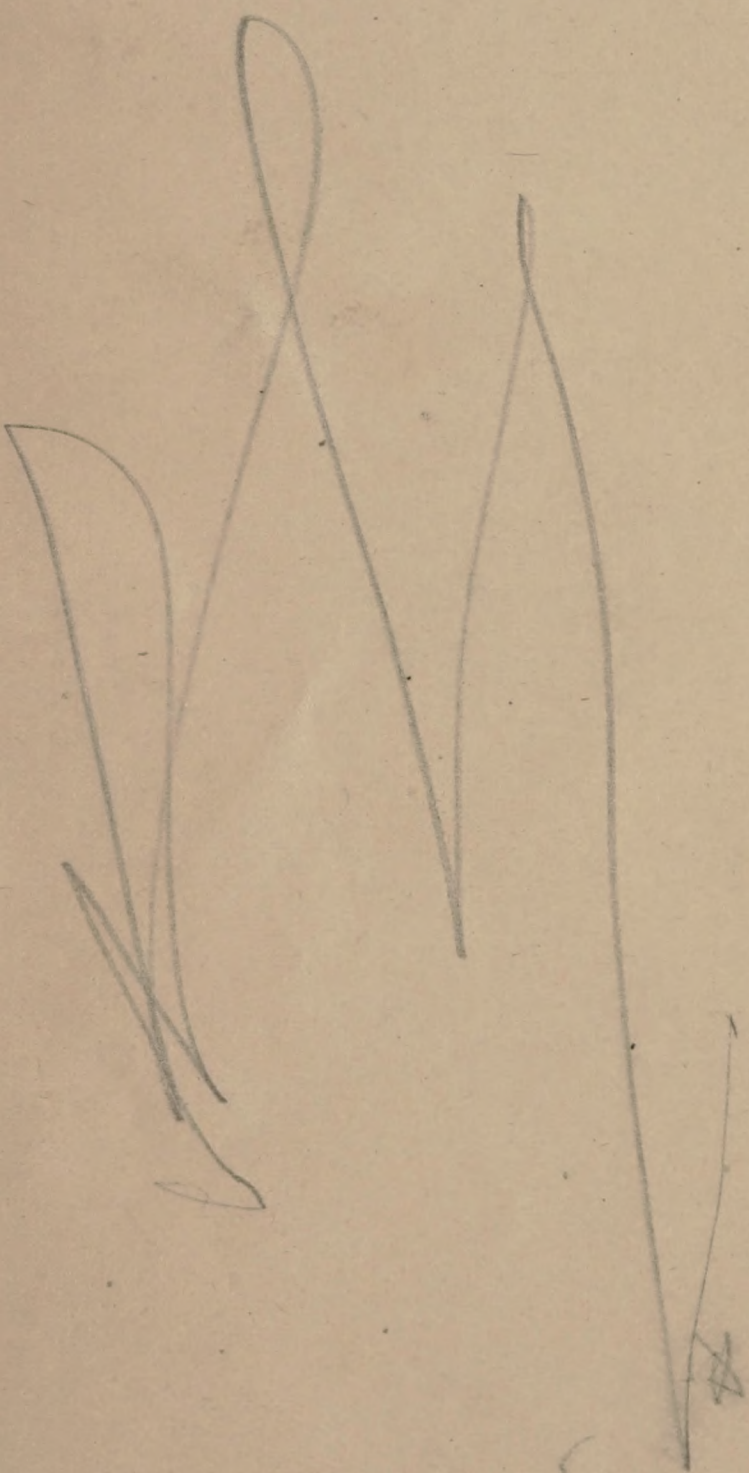












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